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James Lenox.

THE

WORKS

OF

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LONDON;

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE.

ARRANGED AND REVISED,

WITH A VIEW OF THE AUTHOR'S CHARACTER,

BY

JOSIAH PRATT, B.D. F.A.S.

SECOND EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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SERMONS

TAKEN IN

SHORT HAND,

FROM

MR. CECIL'S PREACHING.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

JACOB PUTTING AWAY STRANGE GODS.

GENESIS XXXV. 1–5.

And God said unto Jacob, arise: go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an Altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy Brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, put away the strange Gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments, and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an Altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange Gods which were in their hand, and all their ear-rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the Oak which was by Shechem. And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

WE behold here a very natural picture of a family in the midst of care and trouble; and a pious man at the head of it, whose cares made him forget his sacred obligations. But *the Lord* is *he* that *restoreth the soul!*

Jacob had endured many distresses. One, in particular, lately befel his family, in which his sons had rashly put a city to the sword.

We find him saying to his sons, *Ye have troubled me, to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land; and, I being few in number, they shall gather themselves against me and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.* In the midst of these cares and troubles God admonishes Jacob. As if he had said, "Leave this matter to me. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord: he shall sustain thee,* and thy family too: but *arise thou, and go to Bethel, and dwell there, and make there an altar unto God that appeared unto thee, when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.* Remember thy vow!"

You have an account of this vow in the xxviiith chapter. *And Jacob called the name of that place Bethel. And he vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and, of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*

He vowed a vow, and he forgot it. Occupied with his distresses, particularly the one which lately befel his family, and overwhelmed with care, he forgets a vow of which God reminds him. The Lord said, "Arise and go up to Bethel." Jacob, obedient to the vision, commands his family to put away their strange gods, goes to Bethel, builds an altar, and buries their idolatrous instruments; and

God so protects him, that of the inhabitants of the land, whom he feared, and among whom he felt he was become a nuisance, not one ventured to attack him: *The terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.*

This passage furnishes:

REPROOF OF OUR FORGETFULNESS OF PAST MERCIES.

A LESSON OF DUTY TO OUR FAMILIES.

CONSOLATION TO EVERY PIOUS MAN, WHO UNDERTAKES THE REFORMATION OF HIS FAMILY—one of the most difficult of duties!

I. REPROOF OF OUR FORGETFULNESS OF PAST MERCIES.

It was seven or eight years since Jacob came to Canaan. He had purchased ground, and built an altar; as you will see Chap. xxxiii. 19, 20. But he forgot his vow with respect to the erection of a pillar, which he had promised in the day of his distress. What is this, but a picture of human nature? Let any man look back to his past life, and remember the day of his distress—how he then consecrated himself, and resolved on the reformation of himself and his family. Let him recollect what prospects, under these softening impressions, he pictured out to himself, as to his

future conduct. But that day is gone! He has mingled with the people of the world! Time has worne out his resolutions. It is apt to efface such impressions.

Jacob had endured a sore affliction. In the xxxivth chapter you will read an account of this trial. But still it seems to produce no remembrance of his vow. What is to be done? *He restoreth my soul.* God calls expressly to Jacob—"Jacob!—You have forgot your vow! *Arise, go to Bethel!* Remember what you said in the day—and what you felt in the day when you fled from Esau!" My Dear Hearers, if God loves us he will remind, as well as restore us; and, in order to restore, he will reprove us: he will *chasten* us, if we are not *bastards* but *sons.* "Remember," says he, "when thou fleddest from the face of thy brother Esau. You have forgotten it: but," as if he had said, "I have not forgotten it! I have not forgotten the deliverance which I afforded thee when thou didst wrestle for the blessing."

The remembrance of our past troubles, and of the impressions which they produced, should recal to our minds what we then intended to do, and what we have forgotten to do. Let us, my Dear Hearers, turn over the book of our lives: we are fond of reading many books: but no book will do us so much good, next to the Bible, as reading the history of the dispensations of Providence in

our own particular cases. *Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee, these forty years, in the wilderness: to humble thee and to prove thee, and to know what was in thy heart.* Let us particularly dwell on the pages of distress, and on the special deliverances afforded us: these are to be gratefully remembered. Let us recollect the voice which spake to us in these things, and what the Lord said to Jacob on this occasion: "Jacob! you have forgotten your vow: but I have not forgotten it: arise, and go to Bethel!"

II. We have in these words A LESSON WITH RESPECT TO OUR DUTY IN OUR FAMILIES.

Go to Bethel: but not merely go to Bethel, nor merely build an altar there. Jacob knew that this would avail nothing with a heart-searching God: and therefore he said to his house, "*Put away the strange Gods that are among you.* Let us arise; and, in this way, go to Bethel." *And they gave to Jacob all the strange gods that were in their hand, and all the ear-rings that were in their ears. And Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.*

You see, Brethren, that a man with a family is an accountable man. God spake to Jacob, and Jacob spake to his household. And it is said of

Abraham, *Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? seeing that I know Abraham, that he will command his household after.* I know that he will go forth, and set them an example: that he will be their teacher; and teach them to follow him, in their outward demeanour at least, if he cannot convey grace to enable them to follow him in the heart.

Put away the strange gods that are among you! What did *strange gods* do in the house of Jacob? An extraordinary thing, that there should be *strange* gods in the house of a man that taught his children the knowledge of the true God, and their obligations to him! What! Idols in the house of a godly man, and a sincere witness for God!—a man who had had personal intercourse with God! *Put away the strange Gods that are among* YOU! What! Did he know that he had idols in the house?—So it appears. And what are we to remark from this, but that, in the best families, as some commentator observes, there are strange *things*, if not strange *gods?* Idols will enter, in spite of Jacob; because they are the creatures of the heart, and will dwell in the house in spite of his example and prohibition.

Yet, if we observe them in the houses of others, let us see and mark them with candour, forbearance, and tenderness; for many there are, who will gaze on the faults and idols which they see in the houses of others, who seem quite blind to

greater in their own. We cannot be too tender and candid in the defects which we observe *out* of our houses: perhaps they prove a bitter and severe cross to the owner of that house! He knows there are such things, and he is labouring to prohibit and remove them. His case calls not for our censure; but for our pity, our assistance, and our prayers. There may be idols in a house, and yet the fear of the true God in that house.

But, however candid we ought to be in respect to the idols of others, let us imitate Jacob, in being determined reformers of our own houses. *Put away the strange Gods that are among you.* Yet, whatever we may lament as to the state of our houses, our comfort, if we are real servants of the living God, should be that of David, when he said, "*Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire.* I mourn to see these idols in my family; but, as to myself, I serve the living God." This should be *our* comfort, as well as David's. But our conduct should be that of Jacob: we may lawfully take David's comfort, if we adopt Jacob's conduct. Therefore we find Jacob calling on his family to follow him with cleanness and purity; telling them what God had done for him in the day of his distress: "I am his witness, that he is the God that heareth and answereth prayer." Let us endeavour, as family-

men, to set before our households the reasonableness of the thing, as well as the thing itself. "He appeared to me; he is my friend: I bid you put away idols; and bid you do it, because they incense my friend."

If any one should say to me, "What reference has this to us? What idols have we in our houses?" I ask, Have you nothing in your houses, that takes the place of God in your heart? Did you never read of a *covetous man* being called *an idolater?* What is the pleasure-taker, who will sacrifice every thing to folly and appetite? What is the poor gay worldling, who will banish every religious consideration that he may follow his entertainments? What is the man who makes a god of the creature, and slights the truth of God? Could such an one say to a poor stupid idolater, "I disclaim your conduct as abominable," when his own is far more so, considered in reference to the light under which he lives?

Family reformation is very difficult; as every family-man feels: but let us set forward with the resolution of Jacob, remembering that a sincere desire to reform our houses is a considerable step towards the accomplishment of this reformation, because we work with God: God is on our side. It is never too late to attempt it: yet it can never be attempted too soon.

Some people suppose that they cannot succeed without a special call. My Dear Hearers, much

more can be done than men generally suppose, when it is sincerely and resolutely attempted. Utterly remove those evils, which have a tendency to turn a pious man's house into a seat of idolatry. Bad books poison a house: so do bad company, whose very breath is contagious: your family is injured by dangerous amusements, wrong notions, customary sentiments that will not endure the trial of the Scriptures. *To the law and to the testimony:* if they will not bear that light, it is because they are deeds of darkness. It matters not what you think, or what those persons may think on whose opinion you lean. What does God say? The judge is to try us: let us hear his opinion, before the trial comes on. "*Put away the strange gods that are among you,*" says Jacob. "They will not stand. They will eat out my increase. I cannot build an altar with simplicity, while they remain."

Brethren, as you love your children, and would perform your duty to your children and servants and dependants, teach them the principles and doctrines of Christ. Quote his own words to confirm those truths: and if they reject or neglect them, *it were better for them that they had never been born:* more tolerable will it be for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for them. Depend upon God's blessing your endeavours, in thus setting up his altar; and, while you feel the influence of these truths yourselves, call

upon them to walk after you in obeying them. "Let us arise," says Jacob: "let us go together:" no man knows, even when your heads are laid in the dust, the blessing which God may give to your endeavours: and the seed which you have sown in weakness, perhaps weeping, shall be raised in power; and the harvest be great in the day of judgment.

If you say, "It is a difficult duty!"—I would ask, Do you think it was an easy one to Jacob? Do you think there were no remonstrances?—that the idols were parted with readily?—that the ear-rings were buried under the oak without regret, by the other part of the family? But let us consider, whether we had not better suffer the present remonstrances and objections of our families, than be the means of their enduring the worm that never dies and the fire that never will be quenched: "for whatever," says a certain author, "is added to your life by regard to your own will and way, must either become food for the worm that never dies, or be torne from you with the acutest pain."

Once more, here is in the passage before us

III. CONSOLATION TO EVERY PIOUS MAN WHO UNDERTAKES THE REFORMATION OF HIS FAMILY.

God was with Jacob, while he walked in this way; and, whatever he had to fear from man, *the*

terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them. The path of duty is the path of safety. *If God be for us, who can be against us? He, that spared not his Own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?* God pledges himself, in that act, that he will withhold nothing that is good. He knows our wants, occasions, and necessities: he knows what we have to meet with in his way, and for his name's sake. You may depend on being specially protected, while working the work of God. You cannot expect too much, with respect to his assistance and protection in his way. Leave the event to him: that is not your affair. But, if you go out of his way, you take events upon your own shoulders; you must bear consequences: and who can bear consequences? Fear nothing in a right pursuit: in a wong one, you have every thing to fear.

There is a fine example, in the case of Moses, of consolation in a difficult duty. *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child: and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.* "You shall put the child to death," says the king. "We see," say the parents, "it is a proper child; and we will fear God, and obey God, rather than man: therefore we will hide the child. We will leave the case to God: he is able to protect him, to take him up, and to carry him through,

notwithstanding the dangerous circumstances in which he is born." And I would ask, What became of that child?—This was *their* faith:—*By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.*

Them that honour God, he will honour. The terror of God was upon the inhabitants of the cities of the plain: not a man went out to revenge the outrage of Jacob's sons, though as great a one as ever was committed.

No doubt but every man would feel cause of terror presented to his eye and ear, when the sons of Belial rise up, saying, *Our tongues are our own! who shall be lord over us? I will overtake: I will destroy: my hand shall divide the spoil!* We are not to wonder, if Israel cried out in such a case as this. The sight of terror is overwhelming. But let us remember the case of Peter: he looked at the waves, and he sunk: and he, that looks only at the waves and storms of life, must sink; for sense will bring reports that will overwhelm us. Nothing can then support us but *seeing him that is invisible;* and considering that creatures are all in his hand, and moved by him at his pleasure.

A secret terror was upon the inhabitants of these

cities. Brethren! this is many times the case, when we see nothing of it. The tongues of men are restrained, when we cannot account for the restraint. Deep laid schemes are broken to pieces, when we are surprised to hear that it is so. Malicious plans prove abortive, because God is concerned in thwarting them; and more concerned than we are. The terror of God was the reason that none of the inhabitants of these cities pursued after Jacob: but they would not have known it, if God had not made it known to them. Men love to know the causes of things: the Holy Spirit here tells us plainly what was, in this case the cause: *the terror of God was upon them.*

My Dear Hearers, this same ever-working God is still at the head of all things. *He sitteth King above the water-floods*, as much in this day as in that day: and he hath taught us to put our trust in him, while the dreadful speeches, and threats, and arts of ungodly men are abroad; and has promised us, that in pursuing our way, he will give us lessons of consolation in difficult duties; and that, when we have borne the burden and heat of the day, we shall come to dwell in Bethel—*a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* "*I go,*" says our Lord, "*to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have*

told you; but, because it is so, I tell you of it." All other families will have their failings, embarrassments, and sorrows—But!——There is a family, where nothing of the kind shall ever enter! There is a house, that shall not fail! And I hope there are many here present, whom I shall accompany to that blessed state, where all distress and anguish, sorrow and sighing, shall flee away. Therefore I say, with St. Paul, *For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,* that he would support you in the path of duty which he calls you to enter—that you may take up the cross, bear the burden and heat of the day, and remember that *he is faithful who hath promised,* and that he hath consolations for such of you, as well as trials for you to bear. Let us therefore do his work for the day, and in the day; and wait for the evening, when he shall say, "*Well done, good and faithful servant!* thou hast *borne the burden, endured the cross, despised the shame,* and proved thyself a real disciple of my crucified Son: and now enter into my joy."

That we may enter into that blessed state, and all come to the inheritance of the saints in light, may God grant to us of his infinite mercy!

SERMON II.

THE DYING SAINT'S CONSOLATION.

2 SAMUEL XXIII. 5.

Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

WE are told, in the context, that these were *the last words of David;* probably not the last words which he spake, but the last remarkable words. *And he said, the Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue:* for, *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.* This was exemplified in David himself, but it much more immediately refers to Jesus Christ, *the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth; even a morning without clouds: as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.* These words were put into David's mouth, inasmuch as it was

the character of himself. But, while David received the Spirit, and ruled over Israel in the sight of God, according to the gracious promises made to him, yet, when he came to consider how the matter actually stood at home. "*Although*," said he, "*my house be not so*, not right *with God*; not so as I would wish it; not so as it ought to be; not so as I might expect it to be, considering the instruction which it has received: still the promise holds good! It is my last record. I write it under the influence of the Spirit, and let others read it to the end of time, that whatever be the state of my family, here is my comfort, *He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure:* THAT shall prosper, in whatever state my family may be. Though it does not grow up before my eyes, I will hold fast the truth: I will look to the covenant, and find it to be all the desire of my heart, and all my salvation."

Let us first attend to David's COMPLAINT, "*My house is not so with God:* I see nothing growing."

2dly, To David's CONSOLATION. "Though I have not my house as I could wish, yet there is a rest for my soul: there is consolation: there is an *everlasting covenant*."

After having discoursed on these two points, I shall lead you to a few GENERAL REMARKS on the subject.

Here is set before us, for our instruction,

I. The groanings of David's heart for his family: his COMPLAINT. "My house, my family *is not so with God.* Of what consequence is it what it is, if it is not right with God? What advantage would it be, if every one of my sons was a king, and if they were far more successful than I myself have been? It were all nothing to me, if they were not so with God. They are not *so* as I would wish them to be: they are not *so* as I pray they may be; nor *so* as I fain would make them; and I have but little hope that they will be so when I am gone. And, what is more than all, when I consider that a man's state and condition is exactly that which it is before God, what a painful scene do I see before me!" With what mournful recollection, as well as bitter weeping, must he think of Absalom—a very accomplished young man, a beautiful young man, who could steal the hearts of Israel! What then? He was not *so* with God.

Oh, that parents would think of this, when they are setting their hearts on their children, on their beauty, their accomplishments, their prospects in the world! Oh, that they would stop themselves and ask, "But what are they before God? How do they appear in *his* eyes?" For, unless they are built on the Rock of Ages, they will be soon swept away as the chaff before the wind: while, if their spirits are quickened of God, they shall stand and

grow for ever. "Now," says David, "it is my complaint, that I see nothing grow. I have prayed and waited, and I see nothing springing up. They are looking at the splendour of my kingdom: they are wishing for my place; wishing to take my crown and sceptre before my death; entering into plots and conspiracies against my government: I see nothing grow." Growth depends on grace: the husbandman may plough and sow: it is his duty so to do: but, except the Lord send his sun to shine on his labour, nothing will grow. Has not this been the case in the hearts of many of your children? After all that you can say or do, there is still a drawing back: they are running after every folly; stupid as the deaf adder, with respect to the charming voice of the gospel. Our children can imitate our errors and our sins: they can grow in what is wrong, and will ruin them, because corruption, not grace, runs in the blood. Yet we are to hold on our way, and to do our duty to the best of our ability, that their blood may not be required at our hands. *In the morning*, we must *sow our seed; and in the evening not withhold our hand.* We are to look up to God, who has changed our own hard hearts; and beg him *to turn them from darkness to light, from Satan to God.* It is our duty, while using the means, to remember that abounding mercy of God, which has brought anything of a saving nature into our own hearts.

Do you ask me, what is to be our support, what is to bear you and me up, as Fathers and Masters of Families; to keep us steady—riding at anchor—prepared to meet every thing which may befall us?—I answer, It must be something out of this world; something better than this world can supply: and we will now turn to the consideration of it.

From David's COMPLAINT, in the words of our text, we turn

II. To his CONSOLATION: *Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.*

What is a covenant? It is a Disposition of things,—a Settlement,—a Constitution: whether it come before us in the form of a testament or legacy, or in the nature of a bargain or agreement. Whatever form it assumes, it is a Disposition, a Settlement, a Constitution of things; and the *Everlasting Covenant*, here spoken of, is of this kind. It is a constitution under which a sinner is called to believe and trust in Christ; denominated *everlasting*, because from everlasting in the contrivance, and to everlasting in the continuance.

On this covenant David could build his hope. It is called, in another part of Scripture, *the sure mercies of David.* This covenant is *ordered in all*

[illegible] therefore, we may rest safely. [illegible] making: God contrived, esta- [illegible] ratified it, to advance his own glory; [illegible] the honour of his Son; and for the [illegible] security, and holiness of his people.

The covenant differs from that made with Adam, which was soon to pass away. In this co- [illegible], whatever is required is promised. Has God declared that his people must have a *new heart* and a *right spirit?* he has promised this new heart and this right spirit,—pardon of sin, strength for obedience, grace and glory. And this covenant shall not fail, like that of Adam, for a transgression, because it is secured in Christ. It is *sure:—sure* in its proposals; *sure* in every step of it; and *sure* in the issue.

"Now," says David, "he has made this covenant with me: he has enabled me to rest on its promises by faith: he has taught me to build on the only foundation that he has laid in Zion. *And this is all my salvation:* it all depends on it: all things are contained in it: it is founded on the best promises, everlasting and unchangeable, and therefore it is all in all. What can I have more? What can I wish more? What are my chief desires? Man is a weak and ignorant creature: I have said, 'Give me this,' and 'Give me that:' I have gone to broken cisterns, as well as other men: I have leaned on earth, like other men; and it has proved a broken reed, and oft a spear, and

wounded my hand,—and shall I still idolize it? Away with my fond and childish desires: they are unworthy the man who can grasp the mercies of an everlasting covenant; and therefore, now that I am come to die, and to speak my right sentiments in my right mind, I say that this is not only all my *salvation*, but all my *desire*. If I am told, therefore, that I must walk sorrowfully, in a narrow way, in a puzzling road; that I must be accepted in a better righteousness; that I must even travel by myself in this road to heaven, I answer, 'So be it: I am satisfied.'"

We have seen, then, that David, as well as we, had great complaints to make; but he espies, flies to, and embraces the only sure, firm, permanent dependance and foundation. *He hath made with* ME *an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.*

III. I will not detain you longer on this point, but would rather come still nearer to your bosoms, in the REMARKS that I would make upon the passage.

1. WHATEVER BLESSINGS A PIOUS MAN RECEIVES ON THE ROAD, AS HE TRAVELS THROUGH THE WILDERNESS; YET HE FINDS THAT HE IS NOT AT HOME.

Abraham enjoyed many mercies; but he was not yet at home: and, therefore, he looked, not at his children, nor at his cattle, his lands, his

goods, or his three hundred servants, but to the *house eternal in the heavens.* He looked through temporal blessings to his possessions in glory; as a man looks across his neighbour's fields to his own estate.

Jacob, when he came to stand before Pharaoh, says, "*Few and evil have the days of the years of my pilgrimage been:* I am only a poor pilgrim going home: I am not yet there!"

David, in the midst of the splendour of his court, tells you "I am not at home: that is above: my family is distressing to me: sin has entered it, driven out the peace and comfort of it, and poisoned it; but blessed be God, there is a house above, there is a covenant in which I can wrap up all my hopes and all my desires."

My Dear Hearers, till you learn to look beyond your houses here, and build on better comforts than this world can afford, you are under an imposition. You are deceived. You are *seeking the living among the dead.* Instead, therefore, of murmuring, and repining, and desponding, because present things are uncomfortable, rather thank God that he will not suffer you to rest in them, nor make a portion of them; that there is a voice in them, such as Abraham heard, "Begone! Go to an everlasting covenant! Go to unchangeable promises! Go to that which shall grow! Think not to find a home and a rest here!"

I speak not these things to render you melan-

choly and gloomy. For while I would prevent your building on the sand, I would warn you, that, though a good man feels he is not at home, yet he is still satisfied with what he finds on the road. The Christian is not a misanthrope, who says there is no good in the world, and quarrels with every thing around him. A Christian, when he finds he is not at home, is satisfied, on the whole, because he finds many blessings by the way; and knows that his Lord is bringing him by a *right road* through all his troubles, *to a city of habitation.* As the philosopher said when he was ship-wrecked, and the people were busily employed in removing their goods from the vessel, and one said to him, "What! do you carry nothing away? Do you leave your goods to destruction?"—"No," said he: "I carry all my goods with me:"—so, whenever the Christian is wrecked in death, he says, "I shall carry all my treasure with me: death cannot strip me of my treasure: for I have left my children, and houses, and lands in this life, that I may receive a hundred fold more in the world to come."

Are you called to walk in a dark path?—Think of that bright morning, without a cloud, which is coming: Do you find changes within and changes without?—Think of the *everlasting covenant!* Do you feel anxiety, confusion, and disappointment embittering your lot?—Think of that *covenant* which is *ordered in all things!* Do you find you

can place no dependance on friends and promises? Do your *expectations* fail?—Think of the covenant which is *sure!* Can you keep no hold of anything?—God never intended you should: he offers you his *everlasting covenant!* Of that lay hold! Let other things go. They are not your portion. God intended to loosen your hold, that you might say, "I will look to that which is all my salvation from sin and sorrow! I will look away from that which is precarious and uncertain, to that which is unchangeable. There is a branch that springs from Jesse: that shall be *all my salvation and all my desire*, when I can see nothing else grow."

Brethren! this is the true knowledge of the world, as well as the true knowledge of the Gospel. Here we see what we must live upon, and what we can die upon. Let us lay it down as a maxim, that a Christian, at the very worst, though a beggar in the condition of Lazarus at the gate, covered with sores—is far happier than the rich man, in his best estate.

2. Let us learn, from David's language, that THE TROUBLES OF A CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE ARE PARTICULARLY DESIGNED TO LEAD HIM OUT FROM THE WORLD, AND UPWARD TOWARD HIS HOME.

He is under special teaching. Another man is satisfied, and looks no further. There cannot be a sorer judgment: *Ephraim has joined himself to idols: let him alone.* Let him not find out the fraud.

Sometimes, indeed, the servant of God is gently drawn:—*Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord God, and worship thou him.* But, if he is not disposed to leave his state and condition, if his heart still wishes to rest a little longer and a little longer, God knows how to drive as well as to draw. A thorn is put into his rest. Then he learns to say, "Nothing grows here: this is no longer my garden: here are no peaceful walks, no refreshing shades, no cheering fruits: I must go away: I must look higher."

Was not this the case with Adam?—with Noah?—with Abraham?—with Isaac?—with Jacob?—peculiarly so with Job?—most eminently so with Aaron?—most deplorably so with Eli?—and now, says David, "It is my case: I see what God is doing in my house, to make me look further; and I do look further: and I look to nothing short of the *everlasting covenant.*"

Brethren! if things grew to our minds, we should have no heart to leave them! Trials are the voice which says, "Leave these things! Begone! get away!" They speak to us: but 'till we are brought to say, "Though the fig-tree doth not blossom, though there is no comfort in the creature, yet will I joy in the Lord," we hear in vain.

3. I shall make a Third Remark: and that is, that we should hence learn, NOT ONLY TO LIVE WITNESSES FOR GOD, BUT TO DIE BEARING OUR TESTIMONY TO THE REPORT OF THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST, AND THE BENEFIT AND BLESSING OF HIS EVERLASTING COVENANT.

If fools will come and ask us what there is in the *spirit* of religion, we should endeavour to shew, that, if it can do nothing else, it can bear up a dying sinner; that he has got hold of something substantial and abiding, when every thing flies from them.

The language of the heart carries its own evidence. Even disappointed worldly men leave a strong testimony. I know not that anything ever more forcibly struck me on this subject, than the dying declaration of that haughty man, Cardinal Wolsey: "If I had served my God with half the zeal with which I have served my king, he would not have forsaken me in my old age."

If then we have *tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come*, and the comforts of the *everlasting covenant*, let us say with the poet,

> "Let me thy power and truth proclaim
> To the surviving age;
> And leave a savour of thy name,
> When I shall quit the stage."

To every parent I would say, you had better leave such a testimony as this, addressed to the hearts of your families on a dying bed, than leave

them thousands of gold and silver. Gold and silver may prove but a millstone about their necks, to sink them into the bottomless pit: this shews them that a Christian has something to die with; that he has chosen a better part. It shews them, that, while he lives, he has something in his heart which is all his salvation; and that, if they will perish in spite of all his remonstrances, yet He has a *hope full of immortality*. As though David had said, "*Come, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul.* I have *passed through fire and water.* He hath *covered my head in the day of battle,* and *put a new song in my mouth;* and though I grieve because I have an ungodly house and family around me, yet I will leave my testimony that I die not without consolation. I have something that is *all my desire.* And though I see nothing grow below, I see a garden growing above, to which I am going; ever flourishing, green, and fair; where stands *the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.*" God grant that you and I may leave such a testimony behind us!

SERMON III.

THE CHILD OF PROVIDENCE.

1 KINGS, XVII. 15, 16.

And she went, and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail; according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.

AN attempt to be independent of God is one of the greatest errors to which man has ever been exposed. It was the first temptation addressed to him:—*Ye shall be as gods:* and therefore he ventured to break the command of God, and attempted to be independent of him. This is the essence of sin,—of our fall from God.

This, however, was not the temper of Elijah. Though he seems to have been a man of a sanguine constitution, yet you find, from the account given of him, in this chapter, which begins his history, that, when he had, according to the word of the Lord, declared, *As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word,* he went, according to the command, and hid himself by the brook Cherith, and was fed by ravens morning

and evening, and drank of the brook; and, without any sort of complaint that he should be fed in this manner, he seems quite contented with his accommodations. And, when the brook dried up, *the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there.* And *he arose, and went to Zarephath,* in great simplicity: as if he had said, "Let God send me whither he will, and maintain me how he pleases."

A poor woman was *gathering of sticks:* and Elijah *called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And, as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand.* And she told him her circumstances, and said, *As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not: go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.* Mark the power of faith, in true obedience to God. *She went, and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her*

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she was kept steady: she did not turn aside to crooked paths for meal or oil. The increase of this widow's faith was as great a miracle in grace, as the increase of her oil was in nature.

The Child of Providence, moreover, has communion with God, his leader, while walking in this path. Two men may walk together through the same trial, but in a very different manner. One may quarrel with God every step of his way: "There never was such a case as mine—such losses, trials, hardships!" The other may be taught to say, "*It is the Lord! let him do what seemeth him good!* my particular path of duty is, to glorify God in the fires!"

This widow appears also as the Child of Providence, in the strangeness of the relief which she obtained. We are taught by her history, that they who look to God shall see God. Brethren! all the children of God live too far from God! We limit his Providence. *We* cannot see: therefore we say *he* cannot see. You have heard, no doubt, the enthusiastic and fanatical language of some, who pretend to trust God out of the path of duty; and expect miracles, where none need to be wrought, provided they continued in that path: but, because some are enthusiasts, shall *we* therefore become doubting Sadducees? Shall we talk of God in his Providence, as though we had no relation to God as a Father in Christ Jesus. Shall we forget his appeal to the ravens, the

sparrows, and the lilies? Shall we trifle with his injunction, that we should take no anxious thought for the morrow? While we have before us an extraordinary method of relief, yet I doubt not but that many here could join me, and declare, if it were proper, "In our own particular cases, we could mention extraordinary instances of the interference of the hand of God in the greatest difficulties; so that we have reason to say, 'In the mount of difficulty his hand shall be seen.'"

You may remark also, in this history, that the Child of Providence is under a peculiar teaching; and that it is the common education of the children of God, that where he gives faith he tries it. You here see a woman brought into the most dependent state; and, at the same time, independent of all but God. *We have toiled all night*, says the Apostle, *and have caught nothing*. No matter!—cast again!—if Christ bid, you shall not cast in vain. *We have here five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?*—Nothing!—Yet they are more than sufficient, if God please to employ them: they shall feed five thousand, and there shall be gathered up twelve baskets full of the fragments.

II. Having spoken of the Child of Providence in the text, let us now think of ourselves; and consider what we should LEARN from this history.

1. We are taught thereby, TO SEEK A SAVING ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE GOD OF ELIJAH.

Many persons talk of God; and say that they trust in God, and hang all their hope upon him: but, when I have heard many speak thus, I have marked that they have talked of trusting a God, whom they knew not,—a God out of Christ. They consider not that he is only to be found as a friend—helper—preserver—and exceeding great reward, in the way which he has himself declared: —dwelling in the midst of the bush, to teach us, that we must find him in Christ, or we cannot find him!

Oh, that every man before me might learn, whatever his plans, his projects, and his hopes may be, that he is wholly out of the way, and folly and vanity are written on his schemes, if he does not obtain *the good will of him that dwelt in the bush.*

I see here Parents who are toiling night and day. What are you doing? "I have a large family of children: and I am endeavouring to lay up a portion for them." Why, then, do you not in truth, lay up a portion for them? What! will you lay up a little dust, and call that a portion? Is that a portion for an immortal soul? You are rather hanging a millstone about the necks of your children, which may sink them deeper into ruin. You may thereby tempt them to plunge

into the world: and there they may scatter what you have treasured up, and called a portion! *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul,* is the declaration of David; and, till you lead your children to this portion, you are making no real provision for them.

Here are Schemers before me,—persons fond of speculation! Oh, that such would remember what God says, by the prophet Haggai, on this subject:—*Ye looked for much: and lo! it came to little: and, when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it!* as if it were mere chaff, that he could blow away in a moment. And why? *Because, saith the Lord of Hosts, of my house that is waste: and ye run every man to his own house.* As though he had said, "You do not consider, that there is a better part, which cannot be taken away: and I mean to pour contempt on such a miserable scheme as this, and to shew the vanity and vexation of spirit of every thing under the sun, unless you enjoy it by faith, and under the favonr of God."

He says again, in the second Chapter, *Since those days were, when one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the press-fat, for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty: I smote you with blasting, and with mildew, and with hail, in all the labours of your hands: yet ye turned not to me,*

saith the Lord. But he tells them, soon after, that, in returning to him, they should find *the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree* bring forth; and that from that day he would bless them. They are all his creatures, and shall do what he commands.

One thing, therefore, the Schemer *lacks*:—one thing, which he would find needful, if he understood its value—a saving acquaintance with God! Abraham felt his need of God, and therefore gave up even Isaac at his bidding. Let us learn to seek his favour, and to take his word as our best security.

2. Let us, if we would be wise as the Children of Providence, STUDY GOD'S METHOD WITH HIS CHILDREN.

Lawyers look into Reports of Cases in order to become well acquainted with points on which they are consulted. In arts and sciences, cases and facts are studied. Wise men pay especial regard to facts. Let us, therefore, as Children of Providence, do the same. *Thou meetest those*, says the prophet, *that remember thee in thy ways.* You will then find that God, in educating his child, makes him feel his need—that he can do nothing of himself—that he cannot even think a good thought, without his own aid. He will teach his children their resources: he will make them witnesses to others: he will teach them to pray,

"*Give us this day our daily bread. Feed me with food convenient for me.* Thou canst make the barrel of meal not to fail, and the cruse of oil still to supply my wants: therefore leave me not to carnal contrivances."

3. You, who are POOR in this world, learn, from this history, to obtain A MORE INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE WITH ONE THAT WAS ONCE A VERY POOR MAN, AND HAD NOT WHERE TO LAY HIS HEAD.

He will teach you, "*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is perfected in your weakness.* I can bring you into no situation, in which I cannot sustain you." This will sweeten your barrel of meal, and sanctify your cruse of oil. This will give you true content with your lot; and you shall be able to see, that, as was the case with this widow, God, who knows your wants, will supply them all out of his riches in glory.

4. AS WE WOULD WISH FOR GOD TO HONOUR OUR FAITH, SO WE MUST HONOUR DIVINE DIRECTION.

You must go to God's word, not walk by your own fancy, nor consult your own impressions. Too many religious persons forget this. They say, "I had an impression on my mind, that I ought to do such a thing; therefore I do it." But do they know whence these impressions come? They *may* spring from the vanity of their own

hearts, or they *may* be temptations of Satan. Impressions are not our rule of action. Honour, therefore, your rule of direction, if you would wish God to honour your faith. ***Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.***

And take the sense of Scripture, not merely the letter. Many grievously err herein. They take the letter, without regarding the sense of Scripture; and run thereby into the greatest absurdities. The widow of Zarephath had a clear and express assurance, that this was the word of the Lord: accordingly the word of the Lord was her rule: she rested on the promise. This was not the woman's impression: this was not her fancy: she was not giving credit to reports; but she knew Elijah to be the prophet of the Lord, and that he spake the word of the Lord to her.

But here, perhaps, you are ready to say, "This was a special case: she had sure ground. If I had such assurances, I could act upon it, and be satisfied. The woman could not doubt that the Lord had sent his prophet to her."

But no person on earth, in any former time, had the word of God sent to him for any purpose more important than that for which we have it put into our hands. For, *behold! a greater than Elijah is here! God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake, in time past, unto the fathers by the*

prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son. And when his Son was upon earth, Elijah gave testimony to him: and delivered up to him, as it were, his commission. This is the Great Prophet! What, then, does HE say! What is the word of this Great Prophet to you and to me? *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things else shall be added unto you:* they shall be thrown in, as it were; shall be *added unto you.* Thus, while this widow seemed to give up her all for a word spoken to her, while she gives up her meal and her oil for a bond, we may say, with Bishop Hall on the passage, "Never did corn or olive so increase in growing, as here in consuming." She gained the support of *many days,* by giving up the last meal when God called for it, and which perhaps would not have sustained her and her child for a single day.

You see, therefore, my Dear Hearers, hard as these times are, and much as I doubt not many must suffer in the present season, that you are yet called to honour God in the fire: and, depend upon it, he will honour you in return. Learn to say, with Habakkuk, *Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, and though there be no fruit in the vine, nor cattle in the stall, yet will I joy in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of my salvation.*

There is another consideration, which can be annexed to nothing but to the faith of the Chris-

tian. We are to be here but a few days; but the same Providence, that leads us through these few days in life, engages to lead us also even through death, that we may fear no evil. Therefore, says the Psalmist, *though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me!*

May God enable every one of us to depend on him, in the same exercise of faith and grace; and thus glorify our Father which is in heaven!

SERMON IV.

THE PENITENCE OF KING JOSIAH.

2 KINGS, XXII. 19.

Because thy heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.

THE Bible is written with a very different design from other histories. Other histories may be written generally to instruct or to amuse: but the Bible is written that we may know the God who made us, and the God who will judge us; and that we may know his mind concerning us, before we stand in judgment at his bar.

We here find, therefore, a great number of Facts stated to us.—Historical Facts: and they are stated to us as Cases. They are Cases, in which God discovers his mind concerning this or that man, this or that thing.

One of these cases is before us. *Hilkiah the high priest, said unto Shaphan, the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying,*

Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book: and Shaphan read it before the king. And when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us. They *went* therefore, *unto Huldah,* a *prophetess, the wife of Shallum. And she said unto them. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read. Because they have forsaken me, and have burnt incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah, which sent you to enquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, as touching the words which thou hast heard: Because thy heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and*

against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation, and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me: I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered unto thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

From the words of the text, as they stand connected with this part of sacred history, I propose

First, to notice, in King Josiah, THE EVIDENCES OF A CONTRITE SPIRIT.

And, secondly, The REGARD WHICH GOD IS PLEASED TO SHEW TO SUCH A CONTRITE SPIRIT.

I. Let us notice the CONTRITE SPIRIT of King Josiah.

1. You will observe in the king a MOST AFFECTIONATE AND REVERENTIAL REGARD TO GOD'S WORD.

It came to pass, when the king heard the words of the book of the Law, that he rent his clothes. You are to distinguish such a regard as this to the word of the Lord, from the suggestions of a scrupulous conscience. A scrupulous mind torments itself with every superstitious notion which enters it. Such a conscience is to be distinguished, therefore, from a tender conscience. A tender conscience is an inestimable blessing, as we see in the text; but a scrupulous conscience does nothing

but torment a man. He has marked some omen, some tradition, some sign; and therefore he is uneasy: he has made sin, where God has made no sin: in short, he disregards what the Lord hath spoken. But this was not the case with King Josiah: it was on hearing the word of the Lord that he rent his clothes: he found the standard, and he saw how far the nation and himself fell short of that standard. This is the mark of a truly humble and contrite man; that he regards the standard which God sets up, and acknowledges how far below that standard he falls.

2. It is a second proof of a contrite mind, that it SEEKS INFORMATION.

The king not only heard the words of the book, but he said, *Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people:* and they went to Huldah, a prophetess. Huldah, though a woman, was in office. It pleased God to endue her with the spirit of prophecy. *And she said, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read.* In consequence of this denunciation, the king was willing to bow down to the word of the Lord, and accept of forgiveness in any way God was pleased to send it. How far was this spirit from that of the proud and sceptical man, who will undertake to think for himself in matters too high for him, and is unwilling to receive advice at all in God's

way! A man of such a contrite spirit as Josiah's will not only read the word of God himself, but thank God that he can hear it in any way.

3. You will observe in this contrite spirit A BOWING DOWN TO THE CHARGE WHICH GOD BRINGS AGAINST THE MAN.

The king did not stand to reason on the matter. He did not say, "We are all born with evil dispositions. How can a man help the temper of mind which he brings into the world? the weakness of human nature will plead for the guilt of human nature." Nothing of this! He rends his clothes, in token of his astonishment and self-abhorrence: and it is said, in the text, that his *heart was tender*, contrite, soft: it is said, that *he humbled himself before the Lord*, when he had heard what he had spoken; and that he not only *rent his clothes*—that any man may do, if he is disposed to make a show—but it is added, *thou hast wept before me*. A pharisee would stand and enumerate his good deeds. Josiah might have done this, for he was a man of unfeigned piety: but, on the contrary, he looks only at the defects, and follies, and corruptions of man; and, comparing them with the holiness of God, and the purity of his law, he rends his clothes and cries unto the Lord.

4. You see here a further evidence of such a state of mind, in that, instead of desponding under this view of sin, the king BETAKES HIMSELF TO PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION.

He not only enquires, but God declares that he he had *humbled himself:* he had sought deliverance, and God promises that he should be heard. There is a stubborn spirit in us: it is in human nature. When any difficulty arises, we sit down in despondency. Like the sluggard, we are ready to say, "*There is a lion in the streets:* I cannot go out: I cannot pass: *Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?* But not so this man: he knew, that though he was unworthy, yet he might seek the Lord, and find him in any condition or circumstances. Instead, therefore, of falling into an obstinate and hardened state of mind, he has recourse to prayer, he makes use of means, and he waits to see whether God will be gracious or not.

These are the marks of a contrite and humble spirit, as observed in this king. There is no question but his mind was a right mind: and, therefore, he is an example to us this day.

II. We are, secondly, to remark the REGARD WHICH GOD IS PLEASED TO SHEW TO SUCH A CONTRITE SPIRIT.

By the word of the prophetess, the Lord asserts his honour and truth, and his regard to his declarations; and that he would bring evil upon the place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even every word that he had spoken.

Men may forget God's word; but He does not

forget it. Men may say, *Tush! thou, Lord, wilt not regard it;* but the text shews us the contrary.

"But," saith the Lord, "though I will visit the iniquity of this people, and will demonstrate my holiness in bearing a protest against that which my soul abhorreth; when sooner or later, the sinner shall know that it is impossible for him to contend with me, and prosper; yet inasmuch as *thy heart was tender* when I spake, I have seen it, I have marked it. I saw thee when thou humbledst thyself before me:—an humiliation, perhaps, in private, before God; when no eye saw, but the eye of the Lord. "I heard thee and I marked thy tears," he seems to say: "and I send thee now word, that I have heard thy prayers: and I tell thee that *I will gather thee unto thy fathers in peace, and thine eyes shall not see the evil which I will bring upon this place.* Get, therefore, into thy chamber: shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself for a little while, till the indignation is past. I will cover thee with the shadow of my wings. Them that honour me, I will honour: thou hast honoured me, and I will put honour upon thee. Thou hast been solitary herein, but I will put public honour on thy solitary faith,"

This is by no means, however, a solitary instance of the Lord's acting in this manner: for even when wicked Ahab humbled himself before God, he received a message that at least he himself should not be made a public example in the over-

throw of his country. When the men of Nineveh prayed and humbled themselves before God, on hearing his will by the mouth of Jonah, he marked their humiliation, and shewed to it a special regard: for *Blessed are the poor in spirit:* blessed is the man that can come down, when God rises up. *God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace unto the humble. Thus saith the high and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is humble and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* "Go," as if he had said, "and read my history, from beginning to end; and you will find that one great leading characteristic of my government is, that, while I resist the proud, I give grace unto the humble."

Brethren! there are few, I suppose, present who would attempt to deny any of these truths: but let us beware that we do not rest in the public confession and acknowledgment of general truths. The word that was read in the ears of Josiah, is the word that is read in our ears every Sabbath Day: so that we, as well as the king, are favoured with knowing the mind of God. But now the grand question that we have to ask ourselves, is this, What is the state of our minds on hearing this word? We have seen what the Lord marked in Josiah: but the question is, what he is marking at

this time in us; for *every one of us must give an account of himself to God.*

A great multitude heard the word of God on the day of its being discovered; but they remained as they were before. One went to his farm, and said, "The word of the Lord hath been preached;" but concerned himself no further. Another went to his merchandize, and carried the news. Another married a wife, and forgot every thing that was said. But God has said; "I will bring evil and destruction upon the man that forgets me"—for *the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God!*—Let us apply the case to ourselves. We have heard, as the king and his people did, the word of God. We now know his mind; for he changes not: he is the same now as he was then, and must continue unchanged to all eternity.

Let us then ask ourselves, What effect has the word of God had upon us! Do we remain as we were before we heard it? Are we walking *after the course of this world?* Has the word no place nor authority in our consciences? Has it never brought a charge against us as sinners? Has it never put us on praying to God, that we may be delivered according to the multitude of his mercies? Has he never seen our hearts tender? Has he never marked that we have humbled ourselves before God, when we heard what he spake in his word? If we have never rent our clothes, yet have we never wept

before him?—Certain it is, then, that, whatever we think of ourselves, we may know from this history the mind of the Lord concerning us:—We have heard the word of God as the Israelites did; but it has not been mixed with faith in us who have heard it.

Who hath believed our report? says the prophet. What is this report?—that we have erred and strayed like lost sheep, and that there is a Shepherd who has laid down his life for sinners, and proclaims his mercy in their ears, and calls them that they may come to him and have life.

Do you ask me, why such good news as this is not received? Because men's hearts are not tender. They have not humbled themselves before the Lord, like this prince. They never rent their clothes, nor wept over their condition: and, therefore, being yet hard-hearted, proud, and unbelieving, they cannot receive the truth. The seed may be sown, and it may be good seed; but the ground of their hearts is either hard, or stony, or thorny, and there is no fruit brought to perfection.

If I am preaching to any persons in such a state as this, it becomes me to exhort them to pray earnestly to God, who is sowing the seed, that he would prepare the ground of their hearts: that he would give them this tenderness of heart, this humility of spirit, tears of true repentance, lively faith, and a hope that maketh not ashamed. Then they will understand the text experimentally,

better than I can explain it. And they shall understand, moreover, that God, who promised his blessing and mercy to Josiah, has also blessing and mercy in store for every contrite and believing soul.

Am I speaking, as I trust I am, to those whose hearts God has, by his grace, made tender; proud and hard as they are by nature? Hast thou humbled thyself before him? Hast thou laid to heart what he declares concerning a wicked and unbelieving world, and what shall be its end? Dost thou believe his threatenings as well as his promises? Dost thou believe that the end of the wicked shall be, that they shall *become a desolation and a curse*, as the text expresses it? and hast thou, as one wicked by nature, wept before him; so that he may say concerning thee, as he did concerning Ephraim, *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoan himself:* I have heard him say, *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned?* Hast thou thus wept before the Lord? take then thy comfort from the words of the text, for they are *good words*, and *comfortable words* to such a heart as thine.

The state that I am describing, which was the state of the king's heart, will be a token for good, and a pledge of God's future favour; for the evangelical promise is fulfilled:—"*I will take away the stony heart, and give a heart of flesh:* I will

enable a man to feel, who did not feel: I will enable a man to listen, who did not listen: I will enable a man to submit to my righteousness, who used to glory and boast in his own."

Proud unbelieving persons with whom you may live, may sneer at what God has wrought, and attempt to put a misconstruction on what you are endeavouring to do: in their ignorance and pride, they may say, that you are become a stranger—a singular character; that you have lost your courage and your spirit; that you could once resent things and revenge yourself, but that now you walk humbly before God, and commit all to him. They may scorn that Gospel, with its promises and threatenings, which you now believe, and to which you now bow down.

But are such persons as these to be heard? are men like these, though they walk on every side, and talk proudly, are they to judge?

No! Brethren! we will hear the judge himself. We will hear HIS sentiment on this subject: and may God grant, that we may determine to abide by that judgment, and by no other! that will bear us out in time, and that will bear us out to eternity. Now says the Judge, *Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a pharisee and the other a publican. The pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: I fast twice*

in the week: I give tithes of all that I possess. But *the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven*—his heart was tender and contrite—*but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!* Now hear the Judge, *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

He, who can thus sit at the feet of mercy, and listen to the voice of God, like Mary:—he, who can go, like Magdalen, to the tomb, pouring out his tears, and looking after a Saviour:—he, who, like the woman in Simon's house, can bow down before him, and wash his feet with her tears, and wipe them with her hair:—*Thus saith the Lord God of Israel* to that man, *Because thy heart is tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before me, and wept, I have heard thee;* and *I will gather thee to thy grave in peace.*

SERMON V.

EZRA AN EXAMPLE IN BUSINESS.

EZRA VIII. 21, 22, 23.

Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God; to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him, but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted, and besought our God for this; and he was intreated of us.

As a man loves gold, in that proportion he hates to be imposed upon by counterfeits: and in proportion as a man has a regard for that which is above price, and better than gold, he abhors that hypocrisy which is but its counterfeit.

Not only will the word of God bear its testimony against all that is false and hypocritical, but his work will do this.—His work in the heart of every godly man shall stand as his witness against false characters in the great day: for it shall then be found, that in every station and occupation of life, the grace of God could live in that station and in that occupation, whether the man were a king or a beggar.

The circumstances in which Ezra was placed were as difficult as can be conceived. He had to contend with the scorn and opposition of Pagans, and with the corruption of Jews. He bears up under his difficulties: he labours through them: he *endures as seeing him who is invisible.*

In speaking of Ezra, I shall call your attention to

HIS HUMILIATION:
HIS FAITH:
HIS PRAYER:
HIS HOLY JEALOUSY, and
HIS SUCCESS.

I. His HUMILIATION before God.

I proclaimed, says he, *a fast there at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God.* You see how a man must set out, who hopes to succeed. I think it was Saint Austin who said, "The first thing in religion is humility; and the second thing is humility; and the third thing is humility." The truth is, my Dear Friends, there is nothing done aright where a man does not take a right plan: and what is the right plan for an ungrateful sinner?—a rebel?—a creature that has long fought against God, and is at length recovered by his power and sovereign mercy? Was pride made for such a creature?

The professing world need instruction on this

point, as well as the carnal world. For when we hear people quarrelsome, who yet profess to be religious—asserting their rights on every occasion, even to punctiliousness—talking, in a high tone, "I will not endure this!—I'll not be put upon!"—*What meaneth*, as Samuel said to Saul, if the word and the will of God be properly regarded, *what meaneth this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and this lowing of the oxen which I hear?* This is utterly inconsistent with the Christian character. A Christian is professedly a suffering man—a man of an humble mind, looking to God—avenging not himself—kind—bearing injuries—forgiving them—praying for enemies—doing good even to those who despitefully use and persecute him.

I would not proceed, says Ezra, till there had been a public abasement of ourselves before God: till there had been a fast and prayer, to shew, that, while we sought the blessing, we acknowledged ourselves utterly unworthy of it.

Brethren! business with heaven is best transacted with humility! *Behold, now*, says Abraham, *I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes! Oh! Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but this once.*

II. We remark, secondly, the FAITH of Ezra.

What was his faith? It was that which the Apostle mentions in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It was *the substance of*

things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It was the viewing and taking hold of the protection of the invisible God: for *I proclaimed a fast, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way, for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.* It was as if Ezra had said, as Moses said before him, "*If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.* We are going to Jerusalem: our intention is to set up the house of God: and to take advantage of his touching the heart of Cyrus and the other kings of the earth, who now begin to think of the honour of God, and to give us countenance. We are going on this business, and there are multitudes of robbers in the way: if God protect us not by the way which we have to travel, if he turn not back the designs of the evil men through whom we must pass, with the treasure which we have to carry, it is in vain to attempt to make our way. But all things are in God's hand. He does as he will among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. God only can afford us protection at this time: he only can teach us the right way: he only can guard us and cover our substance: he only can give us a right aim; and can enable us to place on him that simple dependence, which creatures ought always to place on God: he only can point out the *right way, for us, for our little ones, and for all our substance.* My grand affair, therefore, is with him."

This is faith. This it is to endure, as seeing him who is invisible.

III. Let us proceed to his PRAYER.

So we fasted, and besought our God for this.

No men seem more engaged in business, or more qualified for business, than Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel:—men in high offices, and men of eminent abilities. Do you recollect any instance, in which greater confidence was exercised, and a more entire looking to God discovered, than by Ezra? It was equally so with Nehemiah. He was a man of business: yet he seems to say, "I set myself to the work: my heart was in it: my plan was laid: but, before I spoke to the king on the business, I spoke to God. I said, 'O Lord, touch this man's heart, before he gives me the answer; that it may be thy answer though spoken by his lips.'" So, in the case of Daniel, his heart was set on the honour of his God; and you find him treating with God continually, and carrying all his concerns to him: so that the transaction, from beginning to end, was a transaction with God. Now these are men of the highest eminence, and of first-rate abilities; but as eminent for faith, and for a spirit of prayer.

Are *you* a man of business?—Perhaps you say, "I am: and so much a man of business, that I have no time for prayer in my family: I have no time for religion in private: I have no time at

all for family government. I am so hurried, I live in such a bustle, I am carried from one concern to another in such a manner, that I can do nothing as to worship in my family."

Nay, you understand not your business: you know not how to transact your affairs. Instead of pleading your business, as the reason why you should not put up prayer in your family, and look to God for help, the more business you have to transact, the more you ought to trust and to pray. It is the grand secret of a pious man in conducting his affairs, that he first treats with God about them. *The wicked man*, says Solomon, *desireth the net of evil men:* he would carry every point by crafty management—by sagacious plans—by artful expedients: *but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit:* he is rooted and grounded in the care and favour of Him who has the keys of heaven and earth, and manages all the business in the world: fruit is, therefore, yielded to him, and he needs not the net of falsehood—the subterfuges and the miserable contrivances of an unbelieving heart. Ezra was thus a man of prayer.

IV. There is, in his character, a striking feature also of HOLY JEALOUSY.

I sought of the Lord *a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed*—Pray attend to this: for there is herein great delicacy, and much holy tenderness

of conscience. They expected to meet robbers in the way; and might, by asking, have obtained a band of soldiers of the king: but—*I was ashamed! I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king; saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him.* As if he had said, "I would not have the king suppose, while I profess to trust in God, and to teach others to trust in him, that I want this confidence myself. *Should such a man as I flee?* Should I tell him that I am afraid to take a step without his band of soldiers, while I am continually pointing out the power and providence of God over his people?—No! The honour of the cause, the glory of God, the truths which I have professed and preached, make me ashamed to ask for the soldiers. I must have recourse to prayer on this particular occasion."

It is a man's unquestionable duty to employ all means of safety, and to exercise all the prudence in his power: but, under the peculiar circumstances of this case, Ezra rather chooses to expose himself to danger, than to have the honour of God and his cause called in question; especially as he had to do with those who did not see things as he did, nor believe in God, nor trust in his promises.

I principally insist on this part of Ezra's character, because there have been observed, in some persons professedly religious, an indelicacy,—a

want of concern for the glory of God and the honour of his Gospel—unsubdued tempers—ill manners——rudeness: no tenderness with regard to the honour of religion—no anxiety to remove stumbling-blocks out of the way of those who know not the truth—no consideration like this of Ezra, "What will the world think? I must consider this: and, if the consideration cost me something, I must pay the cost. I must make sacrifices. I must not say, 'I will have my way and my will: I care not what others think or say.'" Stumbling-blocks have been thrown in the way of the people of the world, by this want of regard to that nice honour, of which holy Ezra is an example.

On the other hand, there is sometimes observed a criminal timidity. A man dares not to assert his principles. He will give place. He will appear inconsistent; though he will not, in word, deny the truth. Men of the world will ask concerning such a one, "Does the man believe what he professes? If he does, how is it that he bears with me in this, and goes with me in that?" Call not this prudence, Brethren! It is unworthy of that name. But, in the character of Ezra, we see that the honour of his religion wholly possessed the man; and, whatever he lost or suffered, he was determined that the honour of God and his Church should not suffer.

Brethren! *Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify*

your Father which is in heaven. Let them see your holy jealousy, your tender regard to the truth, and your love to God and his cause.

V. I proceed to consider the SUCCESS which attends such a man.

What need is there to dwell on this? Without the spirit of prophecy, any man might have foretold what would be the end of such a conflict as this. God had said long before, *Them that honour me I will honour.* We read accordingly, in the thirty-first verse, *We departed from the river of Ahava, on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us; and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.*

You may, perhaps, see a man humbly looking to his God, as Ezra did; an upright man, engaged in the service of God with holy resolution: and yet, for a time, he may be under a very dark cloud. You see not the man as you will see him, if you wait patiently. But mark the event. *Whatsoever thou dost, look to the end,* says the Wise Man, *and thou shalt not do amiss:* therefore, *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.* For there are *two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie;* and they shall afford him *strong consolation* while under the cloud. Has he *fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him?*—Has he *joined himself to the*

Lord in an everlasting covenant, by faith in Christ Jesus?—Has he taken God at his word?—Has he put his hand into the hand of Omnipotence?—and does he thus wait the event? Then he shall find every word that God has spoken at the beginning of the XXXVIIth Psalm to be literally true: *Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious at the workers of iniquity: for they shall soon be cut down as the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land; and verily thou shalt be fed. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass. Trust in the Lord with all thy heart*, says Solomon, *and lean not to thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

We have now held up Ezra for your example, in his HUMILIATION, FAITH, PRAYER, HOLY JEALOUSY, and SUCCESS.

Are you acting on the stage of life, or are you expecting to do it shortly?—I pray God that you may be enabled to remember, and lay to heart this example. Consider, that, in going forward, and endeavouring to stand for God in your place and affairs, many enemies will labour to remove you. Take, therefore, this one hint—MAKE ONE SURE FRIEND: for, *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

Take the bright example which I have been

preaching from as your pattern. If we look up of a night to the skies, we sometimes see the moon apparently struggling through a dark cloud; now emerging—then plunged into another; getting through that—and again involved. There we see a picture of this man, and of many others mentioned in Scripture. These men are so many way-marks, directing and encouraging you. *Go thy way forth then, by the footsteps of the flock.* Pray for grace and strength, that you may thus press forward, leaving events to God.

And, as these men are way-marks, adapted to conduct the faithful pilgrim on his journey, let it be remembered, that others are exposed by the way-side as examples of just indignation:—Ahithophel, Haman, and Judas, famous in their day for their profession and consequence. Yea, of every wicked man it is recorded, that he *shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.* All that *forget* him! Say to any wicked man whatever, "Are you a wicked man?"—"No!" will be the almost universal reply: "Nobody thinks me such. I think not myself such!"—"But do you live without God?—without worshipping him?—without any concern for his glory, or abasing yourselves before him as Ezra did? Are you without faith in his declarations? Do you thus forget God?—Then you are the people of whom he speaks, when he says, *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that*

forget God. Look up to him then this hour—endeavour to seek his face, and cry, *Turn thou me, O good Lord, and so shall I be turned,* before thou deliverest me up to those executioners from whom there is no redemption. *When once the door is shut, and the Master of the house is risen up, they without will begin to cry, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence, and hast thou not taught in our streets?*—So much the more awful! So much the greater your condemnation! *Depart, I never knew you.* Beg of God, then, that he would give you *the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ,* and enable you *to flee for refuge to the hope set before you.*

SERMON VI.

THE END OF THE UPRIGHT MAN.

Preached on Occasion of the Death of the Rev. NATHANIEL GILBERT: Late Vicar of Bledlow, Bucks; and some years Assistant to Mr. Cecil.

PSALM XXXVII. 37.

Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright; for the end of that Man is Peace.

I CANNOT notice the death of every one of my congregation, though many have departed in peace, since I had the honour and the happiness of ministering here: but, when a servant of God is taken away, who, for several years faithfully ministered, and shone as a light in this place—*a burning and a shining light*—it would be strange if I did not notice his death. And I consider the death of the Rev. NATHANIEL GILBERT, who departed in the course of this last week, as a striking illustration of the text which I have read.

Let us, from these words, consider the CHARACTER, and the END, of the righteous.

I. Let us consider his CHARACTER.

He is here termed the *perfect* and the *upright*.

The mode of speaking is that which is so peculiar to the Scriptures—of naming the same thing twice, in different words, though not with distinct ideas: the perfect man is upright, and the upright man is perfect. Consider, therefore, and *mark* the *perfect*, or *upright man.*

We may discover in the Scriptures three distinct ideas of the word *perfect*, when applied to man.

1. The first is what may be called the lowest stage of perfection:—the SOUND and SINCERE MAN.

This it is which denotes a man to be entire, in contradistinction to a hollow character—a hypocrite.

We have an illustration of this sense of the word in the young man who came to Christ. His history is recorded in the XIXth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. He came to Christ, and said, *Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* Our Lord, after repeating to him the second table of the law, *said unto him, If thou wilt be* PERFECT—that is, if thou wilt be a sound real character; not an empty talking professor, in whose heart religion has no place—if thou wilt be a perfect character—*go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.* But, when the young man heard the terms, *he went away sorrowful:* as though he had said, "If I must be sound and entire; and if,

among other things, in order to be so, I must part with my grand idol, I must go away sorrowful."

Thus God said to Abraham, *Walk before me, and be thou* PERFECT: be entire: be a real character; one that fears God.

With respect to Asa, it is said, *The high places were not removed: nevertheless, his heart was* PERFECT *with the Lord.* He did not do all that he ought to have done: he discovered that imperfection which accompanies the best men: yet his heart was sound and entire: *the heart of Asa was perfect.*

Mark, therefore, the sound and entire character.

2. There is a further advancement: for some ACTUALLY ATTAIN: and they are called *perfect*, on that account: in contradistinction to those who have just set out, though sound and entire.

Our Lord compares the Church to a field of corn: in this respect, that there is *first, the blade; then, the ear; after that, the full corn in the ear.* They are all living characters, which are distinguished by this metaphor; but not equal in respect of growth. Thus St. Paul says of himself, in his Epistle to the Philippians, *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after:* I am pursuing the point to which God purposes to bring me: *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore,* he adds, *as many*

as be perfect, be thus minded: and if, in any thing, ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. So that there is an advanced stage: we are not only to be *babes* in Christ, but *young men:* and not only *young men*, but *fathers.* There is the ripe corn—full ripe—those, who are perfect and mature Christians, in contradistinction to those who have just set out.

3. There is a third stage of advancement spoken of in Scripture: and that is CONSUMMATE.

It is this to which the Apostle alludes, when he speaks of the *spirits of just men* MADE PERFECT: sinless—without flaw, or blemish—without fault before God.

Our departed brother steadily answered the first and second of these gradations. He was not only a sound, sincere, and real character: but he was a ripe Christian: he was, in both respects, a *perfect man.* And now he is advanced to a state, where he will be made perfect in the higher sense —CONSUMMATE.

His integrity seemed almost proverbial. When the Sierra Leone Company required a testimonial of his conduct as a minister in this place, I could not avoid writing in such terms as these:—" If the philosopher, who lighted a candle at noon-day to find an honest man, were to appear again on earth,—know the character of Gilbert,—and ever discover therein any thing mean, improper, or false, instead of lighting his candle again in fur-

ther search of his honest man, he would throw it away in utter despair." He was an eminent instance of a pure and simple-hearted, yet wise and discerning Christian. He shone among us as a light in the world. Mark therefore his end: which leads us to consider

II. The END of the righteous man.

The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the righteous man, says, *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous are taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.* We have before us an illustration of this truth. The end of the upright man, whatever may have been his troubles and imperfections in life, yet, sound and sincere in religion, his end shall be peace: there is prosperity: there is rest: there is happiness!

Far different his end from that of those of whom the Psalmist speaks in the verses before the text: *I have seen the wicked,* says he, *in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away; and lo, he was not! yea, I sought him; but he could not be found.* He shone as a meteor: he blazed like a comet in his day: but still *he passed away!* he was gone like a dream or a vapour: he seemed to be something, but he was nothing: he passed by, and I could hear no more of him!

Such a man was Balaam. He shone in his day. He had considerable gifts: but, says the Apostle, *he loved the wages of unrighteousness:* he was a wicked man.

Such are the men, who have looked to be something, with great splendour and consequence: but, put it to their consciences when they come to die, as the poet expresses it, that, if they think of heavenly grace, they should lift up their hand and make signal of hope—they die and leave no sign!

Such also are they, whom our Lord describes as coming to him, in the Last Day, and saying, "*Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works:* the people looked upon us as if we were some great ones; and marked our eminence in the world." But, says Christ, *I never knew you. Depart from me!*

The end of all such men shall not be peace: but the end of a righteous, sound, sincere character shall be peace.

1. They have REAL PEACE WITH GOD.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience hope; and

hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Such peace had the man of whom I am speaking.

2. They have PEACE WITH MEN.

For true religion produces a disposition of love and peace even towards enemies, not to be conceived by him who is not under its influence. A true Christian would do good to his enemies: he would say, with Christ, "*Father, forgive them!* They know me not: therefore they act as they do." He would say, with St. Stephen, "They are destroying my body with stones, and expressing their enmity in every possible way: but they know me not: therefore, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*"

3. Such a man has PEACE WITH HIS OWN CONSCIENCE.

It is a high attainment, to be able to look round, and at length to find a resting place; while it is the misery of men in general, that they think not at all on their condition. Ask your consciences: say, "I must soon be carried away! the very boards are perhaps prepared that are to make my coffin; the stuff woven, that is to make my shroud! and have I never asked where I shall set my foot in eternity! Does conscience declare that I have not accepted the Gospel?—Not fled for refuge to the hope set before me? On what ground can I stand?"—The end of such a man as Gilbert is peace. After all his difficulties and troubles;

after all the imperfections and sin that he has lamented; yet he goes down to the grave in peace. In this way he will take hold of the hand of a gracious and covenant God, and seem to say, "*Remember thy word to thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope.* Christ has entered this grave before me: *the spirits of just men made perfect* have all had this debt to pay. *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,* I thank God I have peace. *I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.* He has bound himself by his promise. He had no reason but his gracious will, for giving me such an assurance as he has given: there was no ground in me whatever on which to raise such an expectation: but he has raised it: and, since he has, I will rejoice in hope. I will go down beseeching him to remember his word to his servant." The text declares that this shall be the end of the sound and sincere man.

You, who seldom or never think of these things, but will go away from this House of God, and enter into your foolish and vain schemes and conversations,—planning no higher than the ground on which you stand, and the circumstances in which you now move—Do you not know that the hour cometh, and that shortly, in which you would give ten thousand worlds, if you could but gain this peace of which I speak, and which accompanies the end of the perfect man?

I call on you, in the name of God. I would

say, "O Lord, open these blind eyes: unstop these deaf ears: breathe on these dry bones, that they may live. Let these men, at length, mark the perfect man; and see that the end of that man is a solid, well-grounded peace: and that there is a rest remaining for the people of God."

I would call your attention to one thing more in the text. A father takes his child to a place, in which there are many curiosities to be seen; and sees him pleased with a great variety of things which attract his notice: but, bent on the instruction of his child, he will say, "Mark this! Take notice of it! Mind not that or the other. They are mere trifles to please children. But take notice of this thing: it will afford you the instruction which I want you to retain, and which will be found of great use to you on a future occasion. It will be of great use to you that you saw such and such a thing, and you may apply it to important purposes."

God, like this father, seems to say, in the text, "*Mark!——Mark!——Mark the perfect man! Behold the upright!* There is something worth seeing: you may learn much from this: *for the end of that man is peace.*" It is as if he had said, "In the midst of a vain and thoughtless world, and a crooked and perverse generation, there is something to be seen that is worth looking at. *Behold the excellent of the earth, in whom is all my delight.* This is my sign: mark it well!"

Go not away, therefore Brethren, with the rest of the world, and merely talk of such men as Pitt, and Fox, and Nelson: but fix your thoughts on that, which God points out as most worthy your attention.

Look at such men as Enoch: see how they walked with God: observe the grasp of their minds; not satisfied with any thing on earth.

Look at such men as Simeon: *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace:* I have seen enough: I want not to see any more: *mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* As if God had said, "Mark the end of such a man as this: he was my servant: what did he teach you while living? On what did he bid you rest? On what did he rest himself? and see the end of it!"

When Israel was overrun with idolatry, and an answer by fire from heaven was to be the test of the True God, the priests of Baal cut themselves with knives till the blood gushed out; but no fire came: but, when the prophet Elijah lifted up his voice and begged a sign, God gave that sign: the fire came from heaven, consumed the sacrifice, and licked up the water that was in the trench. It is as if he had said, "Mark! see the God that answers by fire!"

So our Lord says to his ministers and people in the world, "*Ye are the salt of the earth: ye are set as lights on a hill.* Go forth, and declare my truth, and I will confirm that truth by the facts

that follow." As he said to the messengers of John, when they enquired whether he was the Messiah that should come, *Go*, said he, *tell John those things which ye have seen and heard.*

Bring this to the present case. I appeal to your consciences. Ye are my witnesses herein. The man, who is now departed to a better world, in the place in which I now stand before you declared to you that there was *no name given under heaven whereby men could be saved, but the name of Jesus.* He declared to you the depravity and misery of fallen man: he gloried in the cross of Christ, and preached it to you: he shewed you that *a man could receive nothing, except it were given him from heaven:* he set forth the influence of the Holy Spirit, enlightening, enlivening, sanctifying the heart: he lived a witness to the efficacy of these truths, and he died in the same faith. God confirmed it with the sign of keeping him upright, watching his steps, and supporting his head in his dying hour. This is God's setting his seal to these things.

When the learned, and the philosopher, and the elevated genius, have taken up their schemes, and set forth their different ways of helping man, God has written confusion on them all. As if he had said, "This is not my way, not my revelation." *God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions:* and these are proofs of it. But, when a man goes forth in the simplicity of the Gospel,

and makes mention of the truth only, God applies it; sets his seal to it in the man, and more or less in the people who hear him.

This is, besides, a warning voice. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright! Remember them*, says the Apostle, *who have had the rule over you; considering the end of their conversation.* Remember the favour granted to the people among whom this servant of God ministered. Mark how the light shone for a time; but mark, also, how short that time! God will call his witness home, yet while he bears his testimony. *Hear ye him! Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright!*

It was, again, as if God should say, "Mark this by way of encouragement. His end is peace. Belshazzer may profane, by his victories, the temple of the Lord, and the vessels of that temple; and may call for them to make entertainment for his thousand Lords! but!—his end is not peace: he trembles at the hand-writing on the wall! Herod may shine in gorgeous robes, and so speak that people may say, *It is the voice of a god and not of a man:* but!—worms shall be sent to devour Herod, and spoil his pomp and grandeur: there is no peace in his end. Some die in absolute horror, because their consciences are actually awake: none but a true Christian can die in a well-grounded hope of life eternal.

Thus died Gilbert: and, though he is not recorded in the eleventh of the Hebrews, yet it may

truly be said, and it must be said for the encouragement of all who are walking in the same way, *These all died in faith; not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

Brethren! it is the utmost wish of my heart, and my most earnest prayer, that you may be found in this number. It is of no manner of importance what a blind and wretched world shall say or think of you: but—may it be truly said of you when you are departed, *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that was peace!*

SERMON VII.

HOPE A SUPPORT IN TROUBLE.

PSALM XLIII. 5.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

A CHRISTIAN has been justly compared to an exotic,—a plant, which flourishes in its own climate: but which, when brought into one unfriendly to its nature, is alive indeed, but sickly. There is something paradoxical, an apparent contradiction, in the Christian's character: he is *sorrowful, yet always rejoicing!*

The book of Psalms is the language of experience. You, who are true servants of God, will find the language of your hearts, at one time or other, such as you find David to have uttered throughout this book. *Judge me, O God, says the Psalmist; and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off: why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy?*

Oh, send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the Altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?—hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. He concluded the former Psalm in the same words: here he repeats them, and again expostulates with himself.

From these words we may make these inferences.

1. That THE BEST OF MEN, AND MEN OF THE DEEPEST EXPERIENCE, MAY, AT TIMES, SUFFER GREAT DEPRESSION.

2. That IT IS THE DUTY OF GOOD MEN TO RESIST SUCH DESPONDENCY.

3. That ALL MEN, WHO ARE TAUGHT OF GOD, ARE TAUGHT THAT THERE IS BUT ONE EFFECTUAL RESOURCE IN ALL CASES OF DEPRESSION.

I. There are times when THE BEST OF MEN SUFFER DEPRESSION.

Let it be remembered, that the best of men are yet in the body. They cannot but feel. They see but in part. They are oppressed and tempted. Elijah, the champion, could say, under depression, *O Lord, take away my life.* David, though

a hero, yet cries out, *I said all men are liars! I shall one day perish:* and, here, *Why go I mourning because of the enemy?*

Sometimes the depression does not arise so much from outward opposition, wearing down the spirit; as that the man feels an evil heart of unbelief, and Satan working on that heart stirring up all its corruptions, and filling it with blasphemous thoughts. I never knew a Christian, who did not complain of the vain and wicked imaginations which were continually passing through his heart!

Now, if it please God to leave this man destitute of those consolations, which alone can uphold the spirit in such troubles; though the man find coldness, desolation, and vanity of heart, yet he cannot be beguiled by the resources of the world. It is in vain to say to such a man, "Go to the theatre: Go to the card table:" he is no longer a child: he cannot be pleased with such toys. If he enjoy not better comforts and consolations; if he cannot mount on the wings of faith, and love, and hope; he cannot but be dejected and sorrowful.

There are, perhaps, no earthly comforts of which a man so satisfactorily partakes, as of those in his own house and family: and, yet, a man who has the highest relish for such enjoyments is sometimes found eating his bread in the bitterness of his soul: the sword is within. It is

with him as with David: his own son is his enemy: or as it was with Job; the wife of his bosom becomes his tempter and reproacher.

A man's friends, like Job's, will sometimes come about him, and tax him with hypocrisy, because he is under depression. No wonder this wears away the spirits.

At other times, where there are none of these causes of dejection, *a bodily disease cleaveth to him, a thorn in the flesh:* that when he would arise and comfort himself, he is so bowed down that he cannot.

Sometimes he is deprived of ordinances, which were his support, and as bread to his soul: and he cries out, with David, *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*

Whatever be the occasion of depression, *the heart knoweth its own bitterness.* Every man best knows what pains and harasses him. The most elevated piety does not raise a man above the common ills of life. When people talk of an abstractedness of mind above pain and care, they talk of something more than humanity. Where God provides a medium for our sorrows, he means that the man should feel those sorrows.

Let us remember then, that, in this present state, this dispensation under which we live, we have reason to call on our souls, in seasons

of depression—*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*

And this leads us to consider

II. That IT IS THE DUTY OF GOOD MEN TO RESIST SUCH DESPONDENCY.

And there are sufficient reasons why a good man should thus resist despair.

1. Because, if his despondency be not arrested in its progress, HE IS IN DANGER OF DISHONOURING GOD.

It will always be an argument of the greatest efficacy with a Christian, that, whatever be his difficulty, it comes from God. Affliction springs not from the ground: it is delivered out in weight and measure. There is no evil in a city, which the Lord hath not done; and the good man knows that *God is faithful, who will not suffer him to be tempted above that he is able.*

But if a man yield to despondency and melancholy, it is the effect of unbelief: it is calling in question the truth of God: it is forgetting the promise of Christ, and that covenant of God, which is *ordered in all things and sure:* it is forgetting that this world is a school; and that a school will have its tasks and its discipline; and that God brings us under these lessons for some wise end, and calls on us for credit and assurance. The prophet, therefore, wisely says, *Although the fig-*

tree shall not blossom, and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

2. But it is the duty of a Christian to resist such despondency, because IT HAS A TENDENCY TO WEAKEN EXERTION.

Religion is exertion. We fight *not* only *with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers.* So that a Christian is a Soldier; but, if the soldier is seized with a panic, he is unstrung in his joints, he cannot stand up in the conflict, his heart is dismayed. The atchievements of an army in hope, courage, and spirits have astonished the world: while very large armies have given place to a handful of men, when those armies have been out of heart. If a Christian gives place to a melancholy and forlorne state of mind; and says, "My hope is perished: I shall one day fall: the enemy gains ground, and it is in vain to fight and strive:" no wonder that Satan takes the advantage.

3. It is the duty of a Christian to resist despondency, because IT IS A SNARE TO HIS NEIGHBOUR, AN INJURY TO HIS FAMILY, AND A SCANDAL TO RELIGION.

Why, therefore, says David, *should I go mourning because of the enemy?—and why should they daily say unto me, Where is thy God?* Why, indeed? And why should we give occasion to say it? Why should we not always call on our souls, when

cast down, to say, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Hope in God!* Therefore *rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: though I fall, I shall arise.*

If a Christian stands firm in all weathers and seasons, a spectator will ask, "On what principle does this man act? When called to pass through difficulties, I have nothing to support me; but this man stands up: he has some secret spring, some consolation, of which I know nothing. There is something grand and supporting in religion. I will enquire after this man's principles: for his religion recommends itself to me in giving him these *Songs in the night.*"

III. I have to set before you that these songs in the night, and this resistance of a melancholy and desponding spirit, proceed on this single principle, that God is an INFALLIBLE RESOURCE to the godly in all cases of trial—HOPE IN GOD.

This is the only way of treating such cases radically. All other proposals made to the wretched will do them no good in the end. All other resources are but as the resource of the drunkard, who, when in pain, has recourse to his cups, which do but increase his malady: he is easier for the moment, but is visited with aggravated pains. Such are carnal resources! But the Christian has solid and substantial repose:—*Hope thou in God.*

An able seaman once said to me, "In fierce

storms, we have but one resource: we keep the ship in a certain position: we cannot act in any way but this: we fix her head to the wind; and, in this way, we weather the storm." This is a picture of the Christian: he endeavours to put himself in a certain position: "My hope and help are in God: he is faithful: *Weeping may endure for a night*, but *I will bear the indignation of the Lord.*" The man who has learnt this peace of heavenly navigation, shall weather the storms of time and of eternity; for he trusts a faithful God, and he shall find him faithful. This confidence has supported thousands in perishing situations, where others would have given up all in despair.

When the traveller Park, sinking in despondency, in the deserts of Africa, cast his eye on a little plant by his side, he gathered courage: "I cannot look around," said he, "without seeing the works and the providence of God!" And thus asks every Christian:—"Will God feed the young ravens? Does he number the hairs of the head? Does he suffer a sparrow to fall to the ground without his notice, though two are sold for a farthing? Should not I then hope in God? *He, that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?* If comfort, therefore, was the best thing for me, he would have given me comfort." A Christian, too, as a wise man, takes care that he is building his hope on that foundation which is warranted. He

is not ferried over the waters by Vain Hope, according to Bunyan's ingenious allegory; but he has a title and right to heaven, because his trust is in Christ Jesus. He is warranted, he is commanded, thus to believe. Nothing is, in this view, so much to be dreaded as unbelief: nothing should alarm us so much, as that, when God has been at such an infinite expence to raise our hope, we should not be found building on his foundation.

Hope in God: that is, hope according to his word: rest on that which *cannot be broken*, and on that God who *cannot deny himself*,—a Covenant Saviour who has commended his love to sinners, and called them to come weary and heavy laden to him for rest; who tells them he can make darkness light, and crooked things straight; who can supply all their need out of his fulness, nor ever forsook the man that trusted in him.

A Christian has experienced this confidence. He can say—" Do not I know, as David did, what it is to be *taken out of the miry clay*, to be *lifted out of the pit*, and have *my feet set upon a rock, and my goings established?* Do not I know what it is to be brought through dark and trying dispensations, and afterwards to praise God for deliverance? Do not I know what singular assistance I have received? Have I not known what it is to be cast down one day, and have my mourning turned into dancing another? I must

hope, therefore, in God from past experience of his mercy."

As to particular cases, we cannot even glance at the character of Omnipotence, without seeing that all cases to him are alike; that there is nothing great, nothing little, with God: nothing plain, nothing intricate: nothing hard, nothing easy! As Asa said, *It is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power.* God has but to speak, and it shall be done: to command only, and it shall stand fast; but to speak again, when it stands fast, and it shall be broken in pieces. With him are power and might: *none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?* Hope, therefore, in God, because he is Almighty, and he will supply all thy wants. Be then the case of a Christian what it may, let him hope in God: and let him add, *for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

I have endeavoured to point out to you then the DEEP DEPRESSIONS, encountered by the best of men—the DUTY OF SUCH MEN—and their ONLY INFALLIBLE RESOURCE, HOPE IN GOD.

Before I dismiss the congregation, I would speak a word to another sort of persons:—Men whom we may term HOPERS. *They* also hope; but it is their misery, that their confidence is ill placed. *They* hope; but it is not in God.

You ask, perhaps, "Whom do you mean? To whom do you speak?"—I reply, Ask yourselves—"Do I hope in God? Do I seek acquaintance with him in his own way? Do I carry my troubles to him? Have I formed any saving acquaintance with him in his word? Are not my hopes placed on something else, however mean, and base, and foolish?" Ask yourselves, if you entertain any hope at all—and who is the man that is not kept alive by hope?—ask on what thy hope is placed.

The most unthinking man talks of hope: the very hypocrite talks of hope; but does not lay it to heart, that it is said, *The hope of the hypocrite shall perish.*

The most carnal man talks of hope;—something that shall comfort him by and by, if not now. Did not Ahab hope to comfort himself in Naboth's vineyard? Did not Solomon hope that in his riches he should find satisfaction? Yet, after all, he found all but *vanity and vexation of spirit.* Did not Haman build high, because he was the favourite of the King? did he not think, "The king is my friend:" and that he might bless his soul, and tell his family of his prosperity?—and what became of Haman?

In the ancient sacrifices, it was the custom to crown the victim with garlands, and lead it to the altar with music. Behold the picture of all vain hopers! They hope not in God: and the decree

is gone forth, *They that turn away from him, shall perish.*

Before, then, you meet the fulfilment of this decree, the decree of him who has declared that *the wicked shall be turned into hell*, instead of calling on yourselves to hope, I pray you to ask, "Why am I lifted up? Let me turn to God, and I cannot raise my hopes too high: I shall be blessed indeed. But my present hope will lead me down to the chambers of death." I pray that the vain thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee; and that thou mayest thus awake in time, before thou sleepest the sleep of death.

But let us learn, Brethren!—I speak to my Fellow-Christians—let us learn never to cast away our confidence, *which hath great recompence of reward.* Never let Satan rob you of your precious jewel—Hope in God: for that has been the honour of the true servants of God, in all ages of the world. By whatever name they may have been called, their character is found here: *Seeing*, then, that *we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.* And, among other things for which we are too look to him, is this, that we may learn to run: and how did he run? *Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Consider*

him, therefore, says the Apostle, *that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.*

I would, finally, leave a few CAUTIONS on your minds.

1. While you are hoping, and not casting away your confidence, you must OFTEN HOPE THROUGH AN INEXPLICABLE PROVIDENCE, AND DEPEND ON GOD IN THE ORDER OF HIS DISPENSATIONS.

He knows his own purposes, though you know them not. *I turn to the right hand*, says Job, *and see him not; and to the left, but cannot perceive him:* yet *he knoweth the way that I take.* We must not wish the wheels of providence to turn from their course; but must hope in that way.

2. EXERCISE HOPE IN THE PATH OF DUTY.

Turn not aside because the way is rough. Trust through the storm. *Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

3. EXERCISE YOUR CONFIDENCE WITH RESPECT TO YOUR BEST INTERESTS.

That is best for the man, which is best for his soul. God does not consult your ease, but your profit: as a wise schoolmaster consults not the ease of his scholars, but their advancement. The Christian must meet God in this way: he must have confidence in him, as promoting his best interests, and doing him good in his latter end.

God hath *confirmed his counsel by an oath, that, by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.* The waves may beat: storms will come: we must expect bad weather; but—the anchor! —the anchor! *which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.*

Here it is that we must lie at anchor. Let God do what he please! *He cannot deny himself! He abideth faithful; and by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for him to lie, he giveth strong consolation to those who flee to him.*

SERMON VIII.

THANKSGIVING ON THE VICTORY OF TRAFALGAR.

PSALM CXVIII. 27.

God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.

NOTHING is more abhorred, of God or man, than ingratitude:—nothing more acceptable, nothing more expected, after the imparting of any benefit, than gratitude. Gratitude implies sensibility, generosity, and a feeling of obligation.

This and the two preceeding Psalms are full of expressions of gratitude; and no doubt relate to some signal deliverance or prosperity, which God had afforded. *I will praise thee*, says the Psalmist; *for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone, which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.*

Light is put for deliverance and prosperity; in contradistinction to the use of the word darkness,

which signifies affliction. *God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light*—some signal deliverance. *Bind ye the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar:* Every acknowledgment was termed a sacrifice; some of thanksgiving, some of expiation. Bring a sacrifice, an offering: God has done it. Bring such a number of them, as a learned man reads it, that they shall reach even to the horns of the altar. The sentiment is evident. It is as if he had said, "God alone hath wrought this deliverance for us: let us yield the strongest expression of our gratitude on the occasion."

From the words of the text thus explained, I shall raise this doctrinal proposition, and apply it to the present occasion:

SPECIAL DELIVERANCES DEMAND SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

I. Let us consider SPECIAL DELIVERANCES.

Is there any one present, who needs information or conviction, with regard to the special deliverances lately received by this nation? There is scarcely a man among you, who could not detail them better than myself: for, living in the world, in business and in public affairs, you hear and know more than a recluse like myself can possibly do.

I would ask you then, on the knowledge which

you have of what has lately passed with respect to this country, Can you find any language that more meets the case than that which the Psalmist employs throughout this Psalm? For instance—*They compassed me about, like bees: they are quenched, as the fire of thorns. Thou hast thrust sore at me, that I might fall: but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right-hand of the Lord doeth valiantly: the right-hand of the Lord is exalted: the right-hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live; and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death.—God is the Lord, who hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.* Bring every expression of your acknowledgment on such an occasion.

If any person present should question the greatness of the victory which we commemorate this day, or the merit of the departed victor, I would send him from this pulpit to learn of a seaman. I would bid him read Lord Collingwood's Dispatches, where the true state of the case is displayed; and displayed in a language of such intelligence and evangelical simplicity and signification, that nothing can be added to it.

Yet while most men among us acknowledge this, they have not perhaps sufficiently regarded

the particular state of things which enhance the importance of the victory. They may not have observed, for instance, the peculiarity of the time; when *the men of might*, of other nations, do not seem to *have found their hands:* yet, in respect to us, it is as if the Almighty should say, ***How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim?*** I will say concerning thine enemies, ***Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.*** Consider the peculiar circumstance of a calm afforded on the occasion, just before the storm which followed the battle came on; as if the waters were bid to stand still, that the victory might be obtained. Consider the disproportion in numbers, both of men and guns; which was so great, that, *if the Lord had not been on our side*, notwithstanding the prowess of our sailors, ***they must have swallowed us up.*** Consider, that, while so many of our enemies' ships were lost in the subsequent storm, not a single British ship perished. Consider, that hereby an additional defence is added to our country, and drawn nearer round us; now no longer necessary for a blockade: and this at a time when we were threatened with all that an enraged enemy could effect against us. Consider, too, the letter which God put it into the heart of our admiral to send. Behold the answer, also, to prayer: while we were praying that God would disappoint the devices of our enemies, and

give victory to our fleets and armies, the victory was gained.

These considerations, without going further into the detail, will oblige us to say, *God is the Lord, who hath shewed us light.* Our national deliverance is great and marvellous: but I must remind you, my Dear Hearers, that, if we do not speak the words of the text with a still higher reference, our view will be defective. The word of God is vast and comprehensive in its views: where it sets out with national deliverances, it ends in a reference to eternal concerns.

The victory we speak of is doubtless a great and singular one: but, let me remind you that all you can say of it is, that it is *a* victory: you cannot say that it is *the* victory. What if, at a stroke, the whole power of France had been annihilated: what if the policy and falsehood and tyranny of that nation had been swept away at a blow:—What then? you reply, "This would have been indeed a victory!" yet not *the* victory. For, let me ask again, What if, after all the conquests that could be possibly obtained on earth, our grand enemies, Sin, Satan, and the World remain unsubdued in our hearts—what if, after all our conquests, we ourselves are found captives, enemies to God, and fighting against one who must prevail:—what if the victors had been sent after the vanquished, and lodged in chains of darkness

for ever and ever—then must we lament, that, though the battle was fought and gained, yet the victory was lost for ever!

But the Scriptures speak to our case. They declare to us that *God is the Lord, which sheweth us light* in this desparate condition of human nature. They teach us how to say, *Thanks be unto God who giveth us* THE *victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* They teach us to understand the text in a more enlarged sense: *God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light;* in sending Christ to be the light of the world; and in promising, that he, that followeth him, *shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* The word of God teaches us, that, now *life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel;* and that the light shall be made to *shine into our hearts,* manifesting *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

If you wish to enquire whether this is the accommodated, or the actual sense of the passage; whether God here intended temporal victory, or that victory which shall be obtained through his Son; you have only to turn to the XXIst chapter of St. Matthew, and the IVth chapter of the Acts, where you will find this very Psalm applied to Christ, the light of the world. We may say, therefore, with Zacharias, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for*

us in the house of his servant David. We are now authorised to say, whatever may be the condition of human nature, *Arise, shine: for thy light is come*—or, as it may be rendered, *Be thou enlightened—the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee—God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light.*

It is melancholy to behold, what must be daily seen by every discerning eye—multitudes carried away with any recent event of a temporal nature, yet wholly insensible to that subject, which is of infinitely greater importance to them:—"An amazing victory has been atchieved! Are not you astonished at what has been done? What a glory it casts on this nation! What a hero was Lord Nelson! There ought to be statues erected in every place to his memory! What a grand event! What a glorious period will this form in English history!" All this is very true: but—there is a matter of infinitely greater importance that is quite forgotten: nay—it is even offensive to mention it at such a time! What a picture of deep depravity! What a mean, sordid, stupid heart is here! What comparison can be drawn between temporal events and eternal concerns?

What is life itself? I cannot see a more striking answer to that question than in the man who went out to fight your battles—There the man stands: and the eyes of the nation are upon him!—the bulwark of the land!—the hope of Britain!—the

terror of our enemies!—his very name a host! A single bullet lays him dead! and the next we see of him, is his corpse carried in procession through the streets to his long home! What is life?

What is your great man!—your mighty man! If, indeed, he be a wicked man, you have only to read one part of the book of Revelations to see—*And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?* Here were men who were able to stand the conflicts of hosts, and to stand like a rock amid storms; but they had not prepared for eternity!

Brethren! let us return to the text: *God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light* in all these cases and events; and it is this light, that brings forward eternal things in comparison with temporal things, and teaches us how to meet the Lamb upon the throne, when *he comes to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe,* when these great men and mighty men are calling to the rocks and mountains to hide them from his presence!

II. We shall proceed to consider, that Special Deliverances demand SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Let us consider this part of the subject—the demand of special acknowledgments:—*Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.* Bind them with cords, and lay them upon it, for a thank-offering to God: for he has done this.

Thanksgiving is the duty of every individual of this nation: *for the crane and the swallow know the time of their coming:* and in how wretched a state is that man, who knows not his obligations to Him who has done great things for him! A mere outward expression, in attending the services appointed for the day, is not, however, sufficient: and much less does it become the man, who consecrates the day, which he calls a Day of Thanksgiving, to festivity and boasting in an arm of flesh; who forgets God, in rioting and drunkenness; who loses sight of eternal things and eternal obligations, in some temporal event, however glorious and however important, *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib:* but such a man considereth not, nor speaketh aright: his taste and sentiment are wrong: his heart is earthly and sensual.

To you, my Dear Hearers, I would address the Apostle's advice: *I beseech you, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a*

living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. If there be a *reasonable service* on earth, it is the service of this day—rightly performed. In the text a sacrifice is enjoined: it was a typical one to the Jews, laid upon a brazen altar: it is a spiritual service, a more excellent sacrifice, that is recommended to the Christian—offered through Jesus Christ, who is both the altar and priest. As members of the Church of England, you express this as part of your service: you say, "Here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee:" and if a man presents himself, we may be assured that every thing which that man has is presented also: if you take hold of the heart of a man, you take the whole of the man, and all that he has. Such a man is prepared for the Apostle's Exhortation, Heb. XIII. 15, 16. *By him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

Let us consider the duties arising out of this subject, as it respects God, our Neighbour, and Ourselves.

1. With respect to OURSELVES.

We should recollect the necessity of proving even to ourselves, that we are sincere when we come before the Lord: for, *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace: be ye warmed and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit?* Our actions must satisfy our own consciences.

Hear what the prophet Isaiah says, even of a Day of Humiliation:—*Is not this the fast that I have chosen—to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee: the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward:* then is it evident, that there is reality and sincerity in thy services.

But much more does it become us, in a day of Public Acknowledgment, to say, *God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light:* therefore *bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.* The wounded, the widow, and the fatherless plead with you. And I should inform you, that the sums contributed on this Day of Thanksgiving will be appropriated to the seamen and marines, and

to the wives and children of the killed and wounded; and that a separate account is to be kept for the purpose, so that your benevolence will be exclusively applied to the relief of your distressed and wounded defenders, and the families of the dead.

And this leads me to speak

2. Of our duty to our NEIGHBOUR.

A caviller once said to Christ, *And who is my neighbour?* Recollect the answer. Remember our Lord's sentiments concerning those who passed by the wounded man that had fallen among thieves—One on one side, the other on the other. Reflect on what he said concerning the man who pitied him, took care of him, set him on his own beast, poured oil and wine into his wounds, carried him to an inn, and ordered care to be taken of him. And call to mind what he says to you and me on that occasion: *Go, and do thou likewise!*

Here is your duty to your neighbour.

You will recollect, however, that this man's neighbour was a stranger to him. The neighbours before us are our countrymen, the men who defend us at the peril of their lives.

I cannot conceive a nobler institution of the kind than the Patriotic Fund. I cannot conceive a more suitable application of your alms, than the strengthening of the hands of the benevolent persons engaged in managing it, and the enabling of them to do things on a large scale.

Your countryman goes forth with his life in his hand; panting, with exertion, to meet the common enemy. He is wounded—not with a ball, but with the splinters of the ship; which often do more execution than the balls themselves. He is maimed for life. Or, it may be that he is killed, before the battle is over; and perhaps at the very time that his widow is talking to her child, and encouraging it: "Ah! my dear child! your father will be home soon, and then our wants will be supplied: we shall have food and clothing: we shall not be distressed then: we shall have plenty of money." But—wife or child never more shall he behold! Such is the sacrifice made by this man? And for whom is it made? —That you and I may abide at home in safety: that you and I may sleep on our beds in peace: that you and I may be protected in our property, and have this day something to give for the relief of the distressed.

Consider, too, what encouragement is hereby given to these warriors to go forth. "If I lose my health, or my limbs, or my life," they will reflect, "my grateful country will take up my wife and children when I am dead. I go satisfied that I do not defend a nation that is ungrateful, and cares nothing for me and mine."

You see then your duty to your neighbour, and this neighbour your defender.

Remember, that we are engaged in a defensive war. I never could reconcile it to my conscience, to plead for an offensive war; for a war of ambition. I consider this merely as a defensive war; and that our ships are our natural bulwarks; and that God has been pleased to bless and honour the exertions of our seamen in an extraordinary way: battle after battle has been accompanied with victory. Now, therefore, if we offer our sacrifice of praise to-day, in consequence of God's shewing us light, let us *bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.*

3. As to our duty with respect to GOD, let us remember, that our sacrifices should be offered to him, who hath done great things for us: we should do what we do as in the sight of God; giving unto him what he hath given unto us. He hath protected us hitherto, and hath made us a most distinguished nation; for, while war, famine, desolation, misery, and death have gone over the face of Europe, what a picture is this country! We are called, therefore, to set up our Ebenezer —*a stone of help*—if we consider the situation and circumstances in which we are, while we present our gifts to God to-day. Who gave those gifts? How are we enabled to offer anything? and if God will accept the offering at our hand, if he hath declared that with such sacrifices he is well pleased, let us not indulge a grudging spirit, or raise any

thing like an objection or cause of withholding in our minds. Instead of being the poorer for our gifts, God has promised to repay them. He has said, that he, *that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord*, and that *he will repay him*. I think I am authorized to say, that never did such an occasion before occur. Such a victory, I believe, never appeared upon record, and perhaps never will again. *God*, therefore, *has shewed us light:* let us *bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar*.

SERMON IX.

THE BENEFIT OF AFFLICTION.

PSALM CXIX. 71.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

THOUGH the Word of God furnishes a Minister with a rich variety of topics; yet his discourses will be much influenced by his feelings, and coloured by his own experience. Is he a man strong in faith?—like one standing upon a mountain, he will naturally discourse to others on the firmness of the foundation on which he stands, and will describe to them the beauties of the prospects around him. Does he, on the contrary, tread the valley of tears?—he will then naturally become the companion of the afflicted, and point out to them what he himself learns in the vale.

The hand of God is discernible in all this, Brethren. He teaches men, by men. As the Apostle speaks, *Whether we be afflicted . . . or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*

Thus, in the text, we find David, who was an eminent prophet and preacher, leaving on record a part of his own experience: *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

From these words I shall take occasion to discourse on the following observation:—SANCTIFIED AFFLICTIONS STAND AMONG THE BEST EXPOSITORS OF GOD'S WORD.

In discoursing on this Observation, let us enquire

1. WHEN AFFLICTION MAY BE SAID TO BE SANCTIFIED.

2. HOW IT HELPS TO EXPLAIN THE WORD OF GOD.

I. WHEN IS AFFLICTION SANCTIFIED?

By sanctified afflictions, those afflictions may be understood which man receives and employs to holy purposes. Sanctified afflictions are those stripes, by which the heart is made better. While some men faint under these strokes, and others despise them, sanctified afflictions become a wholesome discipline, and administer inestimable instruction to God's disciple. He not only learns his way by them, but they teach him to go forward in his way: such afflictions bring a

wanderer, like David, back to his God, to his neighbour, and to himself.

Still the question returns, When is affliction sanctified?

1. Affliction is sanctified, when,—instead of ascribing it to accident, talking of chance, or dwelling on what man can do, and going to creatures for comfort,—WE MARK THE FINGER OF GOD IN WHATEVER BEFALS US, and say with Job, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord:* or when we are taught to say, with holy David, *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it:* or when, under reproaches, we again say, with David, *So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.*

2. Affliction is sanctified, WHEN A MAN IS BROUGHT INTO HIS PLACE.

To bring the prodigal back to his father, is the design of every dispensation: does he say, *I will arise and go to my Father?* does he say, *I have sinned against thee,* O Lord?—*Wherefore,* then, *shall a living man complain?—a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord, for he will still hear?* —Is this his language?—It is then the language of a sanctified heart.

3. Affliction is sanctified, WHEN THE WORD OF GOD BECOMES PRECIOUS.

The man has not only a Bible in his house, but he now takes it down, reads it, and makes it the grand resource of his afflicted soul: it is now read as a reality. When affliction is sanctified, the word of God is leaned on as a staff: it is taken as a cordial. When, in short, the soul can cast anchor on that word, and the man can say, *Remember thy word unto thy servant, O Lord, on which thou hast caused me to put my trust*, then are his afflictions sanctified.

4. Affliction is sanctified, WHEN IT AWAKENS A MAN FROM HIS CARNAL SECURITY; when it drives him from his refuges of lies; when it reminds him of his secret temptations, and sets before him sins unrepented of, and almost forgotten.

Take an instance of this. *We are verily guilty*, said the brethren of Joseph, *we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us.* What language is this? *We are guilty! we are verily guilty!* How strange, that the sons of a pious father should not perceive their sin before! So is it with us, my Friends, till the enchantments of this world are broken.

5. Affliction is sanctified, WHEN FAITH IS JOINED WITH REPENTANCE; when the soul, under its sufferings, still clings to the mercy of God in Christ; crying out, with Job, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:* or, with Jacob, when

he wrestled with God, *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.* That affliction is not only sanctified, but eminently blessed, which brings a sinner to Christ, which teaches us to wait his time, and to acknowledge his mercy in all things.

II. I propose to consider HOW SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION EXPLAINS GOD'S WORD.

Before I was afflicted, says the Psalmist, *I went astray; but now have I learnt thy word;* or, as in the text, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.* "I never," said Luther, "knew the meaning of God's word, till I was afflicted:" and the preacher can say, "I well know now what it is to have preached from a text, which I did not so much as understand, till it was thoroughly opened to me by experience."

Sanctified affliction puts men on enquiry. It makes them look within, as well as without. It quickens the attention, and sharpens the sight. It stops a man in his mad career; and it gives him an opportunity to compare what God has said with what he actually brings to pass.

Let no one mistake me here, as if I asserted that affliction would do this thing of itself. Affliction will only explain and open God's word, as it is an instrument in the hand of his Spirit.

When affliction is not sanctified, it will often lead men, like Cain, to complain with anguish and resentment against God: it will harden a man in guilt: it will plunge him into despair.

Brethren, affliction may grind a man to powder, and yet produce nothing like what the Scripture calls a broken heart. How many, instead of leaning on God's word in their afflictions, turn from that word, as the head would turn from the halter!

It is only then, when God sanctifies affliction, that it becomes a teacher of his word; and that it does this the text asserts: *It is good for me that I have been afflicted;* if it were only for this that *I have been taught thy word.*

Some illustration of this is afforded from the case of David.

As if David had said: "God had always told me, in his word, that he was my only portion; and that vanity and vexation of spirit attend all human pursuits: but affliction made me feel this. I see now the sentence of death inscribed on every thing in this transient world. Oh, that I had learned this lesson sooner from his word; and escaped thereby the more painful lessons of experience!"

As if he had said further: "God had told me, in his word, that sin is a rank poison to the soul, and that none can escape its bitter

consequences: yet I *rolled it as a sweet morsel under my tongue*, till affliction came, and then I fled for my life. Then I said *every word of God is pure;* for *he is not a man that he should lie.*"

"I have been taught," we may again suppose him to say, "I have been taught to sacrifice the blood of goats and of bulls, as the shadow of good things to come: but the sin under which I laboured would have deceived me, had not God thundered in my conscience; nor, till I was awakened, did I cry out, '*Have mercy upon me, O God, have mercy upon me;* and deliver me by a better sacrifice than I can offer! *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts;* but I feel such deep depravity in my heart, that, if thou hadst not appointed *a priest after the order of Melchizedek,* that *cleanseth from all sin,* there had been no hope for me.'"

Again, the word teacheth men to pray. Affliction often brought David to his knees; and, after this, he stands forth as a witness, that seeking God in affliction is the first step towards deliverance. *This poor man,* says he, *cried; and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his trouble.*

David had also *seen the ungodly prosper:* his *foot had* hereon *well nigh slipped:*—but affliction brought him to himself and to the word of God; and then, and not till then, he saw *the*

end of these men. The word by Moses had shewn him before the end of the wicked: but it is one thing to read the Bible, because it is our duty; and it is another thing to fly to that Bible as the relief of our doubts and difficulties.

Once more, after receiving many mercies and many deliverances, David found himself in the midst of a sinful and distracted family: the word of God had taught him to look to heaven alone for comfort; but, like Lot, he lingered—he would fain have found some rest for the sole of his foot in his own house:—who does not resemble him herein?—Fain would he have had the young man Absalom spared! But affliction, at length, broke the enchantment, because it was a sanctified affliction; and he looks up, as he was taught, to a Covenant God alone for comfort. He says, *Although my house be not so with God; yet he has made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and this is all my salvation, and all my desire.*

Thus we see Affliction may, in the hand of God, become an excellent Expositor of his Word. *Now*, says David, *have I learned thy statutes:* now it is that I have learned them from experience and affliction,—more practically, more perfectly, more inwardly, more experimentally.

There is one point in which this remark holds especially true: for the word of God shews us

all how much *we are members one of another;* and with how much sympathy and tenderness we should feel and act one towards another: yet, even among true Christians, who is the man that has thoroughly learned this lesson before he is afflicted? While, I say, sympathy, and tenderness, and kindness, and forbearance, and patience, and love are so strongly enforced in the gospel, who is the man that has learned this lesson of sympathy? Is it the man in health? Is it the prosperous man? Is it the strong man? Is it the man whose neck has never yet bowed to the yoke of affliction? We know the contrary. Even Christ, as the Apostle speaks, was tempted, *that he might know how to succour them that are tempted:* and it is often good for us that we have been afflicted, if it were only that we might know thereby how to sympathize with others; and thus learn, not only the statutes, but the temper of our Master.

Am I, then, speaking to any of you, my Dear Hearers, as persons now in trouble? Let me ask you whither you are going for relief in your trouble. It is a critical time with you—a time of special teaching: and what have you learned under your affliction?

Have you heard God speaking to you, as well as the Bible? Have you spoken to him again, as the author of your trials?—for *affliction springeth not out of the dust.* Have you, with

Hezekiah, prayed unto the Lord with your *face turned toward the wall*—in secrecy and solitude? Have you, with St. Paul, carried the *thorn in the flesh* to the Saviour?—He knew of no deliverer nor comforter but Christ: he carried, therefore, his trouble to him; and found his grace sufficient under that trouble. Bring the matter home—Do you thus honour Christ, as the only one *that openeth, and no man shutteth; that shutteth, and no man openeth?* Above all, have you begged him to sanctify the affliction, that it may thereby become a teacher of the word?—Do you go for comfort to your Bible?—do you find that Bible interpreted by facts and your own experience?—then are ye witnesses for God: ye have the witness in yourselves that the Bible is the word of God. If it be so, you know, by your own feelings, better than I can express it to you, how good it is for you that you have been afflicted.

On the contrary, if you have been often in the furnace of affliction, and yet your vanity, your pride, your worldly mindedness, your carnal affections have in no degree departed from you, then hear the word of the Lord:—affliction is God speaking to the heart, one way; and his word now speaks to your conscience, in another. Read in the fourth chapter of Amos, where he says, *I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye*

not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel! and, because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel! The Day of Judgment approacheth: therefore, Brethren, be ye ready: for *he, who hardeneth his heart, shall surely be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

Christians! be wise to use your afflictive dispensations as from God. The winter season is precious to the husbandman; for he then sows his corn: so is it with the Christian: weeping must not, therefore, hinder sowing. Affliction, when sanctified, is a gift: *It is* GIVEN, says the Apostle, *in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his name.*

Affliction, indeed, is the only gift, for which we are not commanded to pray; but a wise and instructed Christian will know that he ought to pray for a sanctified use of it when sent: we ought to pray that all this cost may not be in vain: we ought to pray, that, by all these afflictions, we may be brought nearer to God, and more out of the world, and never doubt any word of God, or murmur against any of his dispensations, however much we may for the present suffer. In sickness and pain, we not only send for a physician, but we commit ourselves to him: we take thankfully his medicines, though they are unpalatable: we trust to him, that he will restore us to our health.

Ah! which of us all thus trusts the Lord? Who is there among us, that thus takes his bitter medicines, though we are sure he cannot mistake our case? Physicians may err: He cannot. And yet, has he never taught us by past trials?—have we never received relief in times past? Who, that is thoroughly instructed, can avoid saying, with David, from what is past, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes?*

Take then, Christian! your particular case to the Bible this day: and that case will open to you much meaning in the Bible, while the Bible itself will throw a meaning on your case however dark: it will place your situation in a new point of view: you may so have the good word brought home to your hearts and consciences, that, like Hannah, you may go away *no more sad*, but *rejoicing in the God of your salvation.*

May we all be so instructed in the school of affliction, that we may stand as those that are spoken of in the seventh chapter of the book of Revelation:—*These are they, which came out of great tribulation; and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!*

SERMON X.

TO CHILDREN AND PARENTS.*

PROVERBS IV. 1.

Hear, ye Children, the Instruction of a Father.

THE speaker here is King Solomon; who, while he is about to offer some very interesting remarks and to enforce some very instructive doctrines, calls for a particular attention. He calls as one that is a father, as a man of experience, as a man of an affectionate heart; and he declares that he himself was instructed in this way, under the blessing of God, so as to be made wise. *I*, says he, (iv. 3—13.) *was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thy heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom: get understanding—the wisdom that is from above*—the wisdom, which will make a man *wise unto salvation. Get wisdom: get under-*

* This Sermon was preached at the first establishment of the Schools for Religious Instruction at St. John's Chapel. J. P.

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I shall address

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Hear, ye Children, for I speak to you: *hear, ye Children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.*

1. I must inform you that YOUR INTEREST HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY THOUGHT OF by your Ministers, and by some other friends who belong to this place.

And, in order to give you the more simply and

plainly my mind upon the subject, I will tell you what has been our conversation respecting you.

We have said: "What a number of precious souls are here! And what a number are there about the streets, who, when we come to converse with them, are totally insensible with respect to the things of God! What can be done for them? Can we think of any plan? Can we contrive any thing to set them on thinking? Suppose we get a number of them together, and give them such little help as we can; and get them a master and mistress to teach them to read, and collect a little money to buy them some books, and gather them together, and contrive methods that we may at least set some of them to remember their Creator in the days of their youth."

2. It has been said, that it is VERY DIFFICULT, AFTER ALL, TO GAIN YOUR ATTENTION.

Though we say to children, *Hear, ye Children, the instruction of a father;*—of a *father;*—of those, who love you,—of those, who would save you from eternally ruining yourselves:—yet, it has been said, "How difficult it is to get these children seriously to attend!"

Is this the case, my Dear Children?—Is it not?—And yet, are we not planning, and consulting, and devising expedients for your good? Do we not propose to make you happy?—to put you out of danger? Are we not consulting your best interests, in this world and in that which is to come?

What is it but love, that urges your parents and friends?

I beg of you seriously to think of what we are doing. If you were to see a shepherd, who had missed a lamb out of his flock, and was toiling and exhausting himself in the wilderness to find it and bring it back to his fold that it might not be devoured by wild beasts, you would see a picture of what we are doing.

Consider now, therefore, for a moment this very point which we have been speaking of,—the difficulty of getting you to attend to these things:—that we have all wandered from God; that we have all erred and strayed like lost sheep; that we have left undone what we should have done, and done what we should not have done; that there is no health in us; that we are alive to every trifle, and ready for every foolish thing.

What child is there that does not get hold of and pay great attention to foolish trifles?—an idle song? a foolish tale? to the very things that would corrupt him? But, when we are speaking to you of the only thing, either in this world or that to come which can make you happy, what is the reason, that, when the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in both worlds is set before you, your minds are light and wandering like chaff before the wind?

I want to convince you that we are all, every one of us, perishing sinners; and that the god of

this world hath blinded our eyes, that the light of the glorious gospel of God should not shine into our hearts.

3. I will tell you what else has been said. It has been said, that there is not only a difficulty in making children think seriously of what they hear, but, because they are so young, it is VERY DIFFICULT TO MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND AND COMPREHEND THAT RELIGION BY WHICH THEY MUST BE SAVED.

When we say, *Hear, ye Children, the instruction of a father*, if that instruction relates to their salvation, people are ready to say, "You never can make them understand you."

But this I must beg leave to deny. I acknowledge to you, that there are many things in the Bible, which are of such a deep and difficult nature, that the most learned man cannot entirely enter into them: but, with respect to what is necessary to your present and eternal happiness, you are not incapable of understanding it. For instance:—if you can be brought seriously to think of the instruction afforded you at school, you can easily think and understand that you are a sinner, —that you have been unkind and ungrateful to your parents and friends,—that you have been sinners against God and his commands,—that you have told lies, and done things that your own consciences have told you were wrong,—and that are sometimes committing a double fault,

first committing the fault itself, then telling a falsehood to cover it.

Why a child knows—for I have been a child, and I recollect what a child thinks and does—a child knows he is wrong, and that his manner of going on is contrary to what he reads in God's word; and a child can also read in the Bible, that the small and the great must one day stand before God in judgment: not only the aged, but the young must be judged. A child can see in the Bible, that, if God had not provided a Saviour, our mouths must all have been for ever stopped before him. Young and old are guilty before God.

Now, therefore, cannot you understand that you are sinners? Have you not been obliged, very often, to confess how wrong your conduct has been, both toward God and your parents? On the other hand, cannot you understand how gracious God has been? not only in sending Jesus Christ to save sinners, who promises pardon through his blood, and his Holy Spirit to purify the heart and make it alive to God and to love him; but you may also read how gracious this Saviour was to those children that were brought to him, when his disciples would have kept them back that they might not be a trouble to him. He says, *Suffer the little children to come unto me:* and he took little children up in his arms, and blessed them; as though he had said, "I love

children. Bring them to me. I love children to come unto me; and therefore I now set it up as a monument in my Church to shew that I love them to come unto me."

You can read in your Bibles about a foolish young man going away from his father's house, and advice, and instruction, and ruining himself. What a miserable mistake it is, for you to suppose that you can do better for yourselves, than your parents can or will do for you!—better, without your father's advice and counsel, thanwith it! And what a miserable mistake it is, for a man to think he can do better without God, than with him; to fly from God's own counsel, his unerring word of truth!

You can there read about poor Lazarus; and see what a crown is preparing for a man, if he has but a praying heart. Though covered with rags, his affliction is but for a moment: and he is removed, and carried into Abraham's bosom: while the rich man's glory passes away like a dream; and he goes down into hell, where he cannot get one drop of water to cool his tormented tongue.

You may, therefore, see enough in the Bible, and in the good books put into your hands, to teach you what is the mind and will of God concerning you: and you are capable of receiving a gracious proposal from God in Jesus Christ, inviting you to come to him, that you may have life here and eternal life hereafter.

If your parents' houses were on fire, you would be glad of any hand to take hold of you, that you might not be burnt: now what is the Gospel?—It is God's hand stretched out, while he says, *Hear, that your souls may live.*

If you had lived in Noah's time, you would have understood, that, if you did not enter into the Ark, you must be drowned. So, at this day, Jesus Christ is preached in the Gospel to you, and is set forth as the only Saviour—the Deliverer—the High Priest sent from God to redeem you by his blood, and to take you to his kingdom when you die; and if you accept of God's salvation, you shall live, as Noah did.

Let me say one thing more to you.

Suppose, when you think of these things, you find your minds puzzled; and when you get home, you say—" I cannot understand, after all the pains the Minister has been taking with me, I cannot understand how I am to be saved, and to escape the misery of the rich man that he was telling me of, and gain Abraham's bosom."

Then I will tell you what to do:—go, and kneel down, and say, " O Lord! I am a poor, ignorant child: I cannot teach myself, and the Minister cannot teach me: but thou canst teach me. Thou didst teach young Samuel, when the High Priest could not: therefore send thy Holy Spirit to teach me, and to make me understand thy love. Oh, make a child to understand thy

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also, and I know how discouraging it is, after striving to turn the hearts of children, to see them return back again, and *start aside like a broken bow*. Our hearts are ready to faint in this work; and to plead, "It never can be done:" but this is a great temptation.

I would have you all despair, indeed, of doing any thing to purpose without God, either for your own souls or your children's. I smile at the man who comes forward and says, "I have an infallible plan! I have a sure method of education! I can bend the mind, and teach to purpose!" The man is blind, and knows not that God only can change and direct the heart.

Yet, while we should despair of effecting any thing by our own power and wisdom, I charge it upon you in the name of God, I charge it upon you as one that would secure you from the temptations of Satan, never to despair respecting your children: and for this reason; because you may put your trust in a Divine Power, when you can hope in nothing else.

The question is this, Has God spoken to us in his word? Has he not said, *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old*—mark that, *when he is old*, if not before—*he shall not depart from it?*

On the other hand, has he not spoken of neglecting them?—of giving them up to their own lusts? Has he not said, that, *As a man soweth, so*

shall he also reap: he that soweth to the flesh,—that pampers his child, teaches him to admire what God hates, and slight what God recommends,—must take all the sad consequences of their eternal ruin upon his own head?

In the morning, therefore, *sow thy seed; and in the evening, withhold not thy hand.* The husbandman does not despair, but sows the seed, and waits for the season: that is, he waits for God's time. Seed-time and harvest are periodical in nature: but the seed which the parent sows has no such periodical seasons. It comes up when God pleases. And I must also tell you, as a public witness for God and his truth, that you should never despair. No distressed woman ever *hoped* more *against hope*, than the mother of your Preacher: but she prayed; and while she prayed, she waited patiently, and put her trust in an Omnipotent Arm. Like the Syro-Phenician woman, she cried, *Lord help me!* She not only prayed, and waited; but she instructed his mind, and then waited God's season: and she lived long enough to hear that her child *preached that gospel which he once despised;* and she said, *Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!*

My Dear Friends, it was on this principle, that Noah framed his ark: *warned of God, and moved with fear, he prepared an ark to the saving of his house:* his faith saved his family from the Flood. God bears testimony, also, (Gen. xviii. 19.)

to the faith of Abraham: *I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him:* and *them that honour me,* God says, *I will honour.* It is said, (Exod. ix. 20, 21.) *He, that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee unto the houses;* and they were saved from the storm: *and he, that regarded not the word of the Lord, left his servants and his cattle in the field;* that is, they let things take their course: and that is the general way of the world.

I beseech you to take up the holy reasoning, then, of the holy men of whom I have been speaking—the holy resolution, in the midst of an ungodly world, of saving your own souls, and those of your children. Say with Joshua, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* Think of the case of Eli, who, though a good man, forgot good rules, neglected his sons, and suffered them to run at random: God brought a heavy judgment on the house of Eli, and told him that as he had honoured his sons more than him, he would bring reproach upon his house. I beseech you, therefore, to look on your children, in this way of true affection; and not to be anxious about their advancement in this world. But be you anxious concerning that, which our Lord pointed out: *Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall never be taken away from her.*

My Dear Hearers, I conclude with this ob-

servation: what is interesting truth with respect to *children*, is interesting truth to us *all*. Their bodies need food, and raiment, and care; but may not instruction to their souls be compared to food, and raiment, and medicine for their bodies? Their souls must have the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, and the Medicines of the Gospel—or perish for ever! They need these to strengthen them; to enable them to arise, and travel through this wilderness world, in their way to a better.

I pray God, therefore, that whatever I have been saying to the children, both Parents and Children may so take hold of, as to take hold of knowledge, and to keep it fast, and to take care of it as that which contains eternal life and every blessing. May the Holy Spirit apply these truths to all our hearts! Amen.

SERMON XI.

ADVANTAGES OF THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

ECCLESIASTES VII. 2.

It is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to go to the House of Feasting.

NOTHING seems more contradictory to the general sentiments of mankind, than this declaration of the Wise Man. I shall, therefore,

1. STATE THE SENSE OF THE WORDS.
2. ILLUSTRATE THE FACT.

I. With respect to the SENSE, it seems sufficiently obvious.

"It is better," as one expresses it, "to go to a funeral, than to a festival." A man may lawfully do both: he may glorify God, as Christ did, in going to both: Christ went to the marriage-festival at Cana; and he went to the grave in Bethany, and groaned and wept there.

The House of Mourning is to be considered, however, as a very distinct thing from any sort of monkish austerity. Men are not taught of God to be ingenious in tormenting themselves; nor to be volunteers in humility, as the Apostle

expresses it. The Wise Man here speaks of any dispensation of affliction, which God has set before us in his providence, *There is a time to weep*, and to meet an afflictive dispensation; and, instead of wishing to avoid such dispensation by sinful methods, the Wise Man tells us in the text, that *It is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting.*

Those persons, therefore, of whom Isaiah speaks, in his fifty-sixth chapter, who say, *Come ye, I will fetch wine; and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant*—these men have wholly mistaken the matter: it would be better, far better, to go to a scene of trial and affliction, than to let themselves loose, like brute beasts, to the gratification of their passions.

II. Let us endeavour to ILLUSTRATE THE TEXT.

I shall do this, by shewing you, that the House of Mourning is better than the House of Feasting in these Four respects: as

1. It gives BETTER LESSONS:
2. Supplies BETTER COMPANY:
3. Yields BETTER COMFORTS: and
4. Promises A BETTER END.

1. There are BETTER LESSONS afforded in the House of Mourning, than in the House of Feasting.

The Wise Man says, at the 12th verse of this chapter, that *Wisdom is a defence—It is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting: for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart.* There is not a better lesson. It points to the end of man. If any thing will set him on thinking, it is, that this is what all must expect: every man must arrive at it. This house seals, therefore, on man's heart a most important fact, if he possesses any feeling.

There is not a person present, perhaps, who has not, in his youth, adopted the contrary sentiment. We all know, who have ourselves been desirous of going to the House of Feasting, that the very tendency and design of it is to make us forget every thing that we ought to remember and inculcate upon the mind. The House of Mourning is wholly the reverse in its tendency: if the man is sober at all, he is sober there: he must be far gone indeed, if he does not think then!

Thoughtless man builds a house, and consecrates it expressly to madness, folly, trifling, intemperance, and profaneness. But God mercifully provides another house, to bring him back to recollection, by shewing him the end of man: and thus, as the Wise Man says in the 3d verse, *Sorrow is better than laughter: for, by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better.*

It is a great thing, Brethren, to induce men to think at all. Men talk of thinking; but very few

think seriously: you rarely meet a man that has a recollected mind, who thinks to any purpose, and asks *What shall I do in the end thereof?* You can have made no observation on life, if you have not remarked this. It is the grand plan, of what I may call the ordinances of our Great Enemy,—the House of Festivity,—to destroy all recollection: but the House of Mourning seems, among other objects, to be designed of God to bring men to thoughtfulness.

There are, therefore, better lessons to be learned in the House of Mourning, than in the House of Mirth.

2. It has BETTER COMPANY.

The heart of the wise is in the House of Mourning, but the heart of fools is in the House of Mirth. Now as far as a Wise Man is preferable to a fool, so far is it better to go to to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting.

I know not a worse abuse of a term, than that of the "best company." Such a one "keeps the best company:" that is, the most fashionable people; persons best acquainted with the sciences, and talk, and maxims of the day—who value themselves highly on such trifling, silly, empty accomplishments—and, because they are loquacious and know the small-talk of the day, they are called by others the "best company!" A thinking man, who endeavours to weigh things as they are, will generally call them almost the worst

company he can meet; for were he to spend years in their society, would he be the wiser?—would he be the better?—would he be improving in virtue, much less in religion—in the care of the soul—in the knowledge of God—in faith in Christ? I protest, therefore, against this abuse of the term.

I said that the House of Mourning has better company.

In this house men are so taught to think, and to lay things to heart, that even foolish and trifling men seem at least to have a wisdom there which does not belong to them.

But here are the redeemed of the Lord:—men prepared for any dispensation which God is pleased to afford—learning and studying his will, and asking what he would have them to do. And it is not a small part of the happiness of these men, that they are delivered from that which is the plague of the wise—I mean, Custom.

Here are found, also, "the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, and the noble army of Martyrs."

There Christ himself was found—the *man of sorrows!* This is the way to his table, and to his friends above.

My Dear Hearers, if you have found a friend, a real friend, thank God that he has raised up such an one to take care for your soul, to take pains with you, to set before you the falsehoods of life, the cheats and impositions continually put on men.

Thank God, if he has raised up such an one, that will take you by the hand, and say, "Let us go and serve the Lord: and, if he call to the House of Sorrow, let it be the House of Wisdom."

3. The House of Mourning has BETTER COMFORTS.

This would be an inexplicable paradox to many —"Comforts in the House of Mourning! there may be Lessons of Instruction;—but what do you mean by Comforts? Brethren! there is bread to eat in that house, which the world knows not of. *Thanks be unto God*, says the Apostle, *who always causeth us to triumph in Christ;* not only in the day of prosperity, but in the day of adversity. His friends have *songs in the house of their pilgrimage.* The drunkard, in his intoxication, may raise a midnight song: but who will compare his joys with the exultation of that song which was raised by Paul and Silas at midnight in a dungeon?

You have the true description of those joys which are found in the House of Mirth, at the 6th verse of this chapter:—*For, as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool.* The joy of the House of Feasting is like *the crackling of thorns*—a blaze! a momentary blaze! leaving the man in darkness—vexed and chagrined—and frequently driven to commit suicide, in order to escape present disappointment and perplexity!

What is Comfort?—not the intoxicating song

of the drunkard!—not the foolish talk of the trifler!—not the nonsense of the man who for amusement displays his wit, or rather his folly! What is comfort? It is a serious satisfaction—something sedative—something well-grounded—something that will administer consolation on a death-bed; that will bear up a man, and enable him to cry, *O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory?*

Can you tell me of any thing of this sort in the House of Feasting? If there is nothing else in the House of Mourning to comfort us, there is the voice of our Master—the voice of faithfulness, power, and love, to accomplish what he has said: *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* Here is the Comforter himself—a comforter that the world cannot give, nor take away.

4. A BETTER END awaits us in the House of Mourning.

It was the advice of the Wise Man, *Whatsoever thou puttest thy hand unto, look to the end; and thou wilt not do amiss.* Here you may look to the end: you may ask your heart seriously, "What is the end of all this? For what purpose does God bring me this way? Why?—It is the way by which he leads his children, and he is leading them to a kingdom, and this is the path to that kingdom. I have not, indeed, what he had who *was clothed in purple and fine linen, and*

fared sumptuously every day: yet, blessed be God, I have not the distresses of Lazarus, nor am I fed with his crumbs: but, if I must set my foot in one of these two paths, when I look to the end thereof it does not require a moment's hesitation to decide between them. Let me be Lazarus: let me see Abraham's bosom, by faith; and wait God's time in God's way."

I have seen enough of life, and felt enough to know how painful it is to speak plainly to the Young and Gay: but shall we say to them that the end of these things is not death?—that the House of Feasting may probably end as well as the House of Affliction—of repentance—of faith, and hope, and love? Dare we say this? Shall we not rather declare, plainly and expressly, *Thus saith the Lord, Rejoice, O Young Man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth*:—go to the House of Feasting: call your father a fool: say that religion is the language of the nursery: adopt the maxims of a set of mad companions: laugh at every thing serious: go on—but, God says, in answer to all this, *Know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment*. Know, Young Woman, that, with all the admiration thou wilt attain, God has said, that *She, that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth*.

In passing through such paths, therefore, as God has set before us, either in the dispensations

of his Providence or in his Word, and in waiting on a faithful God for the fulfilment of his promises, we shall have a better conclusion in going to the House of Mourning than to the House of Mirth.

I speak more particularly to young persons on this point, because, of all people, they seem least acquainted with it. I would say to such, Fear not this doctrine: Fear not the truth of God. It will always do you good: you will be ruined in opposing or neglecting it. Be not, therefore, afraid of the truth. A poor lunatic, in the midst of his gaiety and vanity, if his physician should offer him a bitter medicine, might hate the man because he brought the medicine, and the medicine because it was bitter and would spoil his sport, while its tendency was to enable him to enjoy life and perfect rationality—Such is the man who hates truth or its teachers! All that you can possibly wish for or imagine here, how many thousands have attained! And where are they now?—they have passed, in a long procession, one after another, down to the grave, Follow the bier of any one of them: the corpse would shock you—it is covered up—hid from your eyes—put into the ground—soon forgotten—and, now, where is all that House of Mirth in which the man once shone, and was amused, and was admired by others, and most of all by himself? While you see this most evidently before your eyes, remember that this is no mystical doctrine,

no difficult controversial point, but the history of every day.

Let us take heed, then, whatever else we forget, that we do not forget the remedy which God has set before our eyes. You have heard many a sermon from a weak man, like yourselves—a man of like passions with you: but, perhaps, your own family God has made a House of Mourning: he brings home what you have heard: he sets it before your eyes, and wrings your feelings with it: and are you as vain and trifling now, as if he had not taken pains with you? Is all this care thrown away? Do you need another stroke? I assure you, that though, as ministers, we cannot avoid feeling sympathy with those who have lost a friend or relative; yet a preacher cannot but recollect that this is the sound of his Master's feet behind him: and, while he laments your sufferings, he knows that his admonitions would have little effect in many cases, were not truth brought home thus painfully to your business and bosom.

Again, it is better to go to the House of Mourning than to the House of Feasting, because however dark the house may be; though it may resemble a prison with its bars, so that a man may be ready to say, *I am shut up: I cannot get forth:* yet there is no House of Mourning but what admits a ray of the sun, and that beam is a beam of immortality. Christ says to the inhabitants of the House of Mourning, "Look out! Is thy consola-

tion small? Is thy prospect to be despised? Is there nothing to be said in this case, that may rouse thy attention, comfort thy heart, and excite *a hope full of immortality*, when this vision of the moment is gone?"—and how soon will it be gone with every one of us!

There is not a house in which any one of you lives, which will not soon be a House of Mourning on his account. "He is dead!"—"*He hath been dead these four days!*"—"My father is dead!"—"My mother is dead!"—"*The desire of my eyes is taken away at a stroke!*—My dear child is gone!"

Remember, then, that, in that house, whatever is gone, one thing is left—the promise of a faithful God: *I am the resurrection and the life: he, that believeth in me, shall never die.* There is a *one thing needful:* a *better part:* a voice of instruction, at that very time saying to you, "Take hold of my hand, as you descend to the grave: hold fast my hand, as your refuge set before you. Pray to God with David, *Remember me with the favour which thou bearest to thy people: visit me with thy salvation: that I may see the good of thy chosen; that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation; that I may glory with thine inheritance. Remember the word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope.*"

Whatever remedies others may propose on this occasion, there is no effectual remedy but the

Gospel. Imagination even cannot suppose comfort in death, but from the voice of God calling to look forward to immortality and security. Let us, therefore, while in the House of Mourning, not lose the grand truth which is so strongly set forth in it—*I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live; and he, that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.* That you and I may take firm hold of that privilege, may God grant, for Jesus Christ's sake!

SERMON XII.

THE VANITY OF HUMAN IMAGINATIONS.

JEREMIAH XXIII. 28, 29.

The prophet, that hath a dream, let him tell a dream: and he, that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord: and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?

ERROR consists in following the reveries of human imagination, instead of the plain dictates of the Word of God. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light:* it suits their natural concupiscence: this therefore is the condemnation, the root of their errors both of heart and head, that they lean to their human understandings and inclinations, instead of the plain directions given them in God's Word.

Against this we find the Prophet entering a solemn protest. *My heart within me,* says he, *is broken, because of the prophets: all my bones shake: I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome; because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness. They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said,*

Ye shall have peace: and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you—I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets, that prophesy lies?—which think to cause my people to forget my name, by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour—The prophet, that hath a dream, let him tell a dream: if these men have dreamed something in their own minds that God hath laid no foundation, let them tell it as a dream: it is but a dream: but let them not call it the Word of God: let them not lay it down as a foundation of truth! such a prophet as has thus dreamed, let him tell his dream; but let him tell it as a dream. But *he, that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully:* let him simply deliver my message: neither adding to it, nor detracting from it: *let him speak my word faithfully: for what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord:* the dreams of these false prophets are but chaff at the best; and what is all this chaff to the purpose? it is not to be compared to the wheat, which is solid, substantial, and nourishing: *what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord:* for, *Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord: and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?* Is it not efficient? Will it not accomplish that for which I sent it?

This passage discovers, therefore, to us,

1. The VANITY OF ALL HUMAN IMAGINATIONS IN RELIGION.

2. The ENERGY OF SCRIPTURAL TRUTH.

I. Let us consider the VANITY OF ALL HUMAN IMAGINATIONS IN RELIGION.

If a man has a dream, let him tell it as a dream: but let him not bring it forward as any foundation for faith and practice.

In considering this subject, we are to reflect that man is an active being: he must be employed: but, however active he may be, if, in setting forward in a project, he neglect some given standard, to which that project should be brought to try its truth and validity; if he proceed, leaning to his imagination and his own understanding; he resembles a traveller, who sets out perhaps with great energy, and travels at a vast rate: but, so far is he from coming to his point, that, the faster he travels, the more he deviates from the path which he should have pursued: he is wholly wrong; and, therefore, the rate of his travelling only leads him faster and further into error. In religion, a man may be *ever learning, and* yet *never able to come to the* real *knowledge of the truth;* because, like the traveller, he takes the wrong road.

Look at the deplorable state of the Heathen World; yet they have had great lights; men of

astonishing genius and perseverance. But where are they? You can see very little more in the Heathen World, so far as it respects moral considerations in religion, than dreams of vanity and vice. *I have dreamed: I have dreamed:* but *what is all this chaff to the wheat?*

And, even under Divine Revelation—when God has spoken—look at the state of the Antediluvians, when God saw the earth covered with wickedness and idolatry. Look at the state of the Jews, after such wonders and signal deliverances:—images worshipped as their gods! Look at the state of Christianity, over a great part of the earth: what superstition! what tyranny over conscience! what gross imposition on mankind! And even look into the Protestant World—where we profess to rid ourselves of these evils—what divisions, and unscriptural notions!

And what is all this?—It shews the vanity of human imaginations: the evil of setting up some fancy and idol, instead of simply following God's word: the folly of a man saying, as if he was fond of his reveries, *I have dreamed: I have dreamed.*

But, when we reflect on the vanity of human imaginations in religion, we should consider two things:

1. Let us ask, WHAT DO ALL THESE AFFORD TO MAN?

There are certain grand questions which a man

has to ask; and he lies in darkness and sleeps the sleep of death, till he does actually ask these questions, and that very seriously. He should, first, enquire into his fallen state, as having departed from the living God, by an awful alienation of heart and apostacy. He should enquire as to any remedy, which God hath appointed in this case: where there is any constitution or appointment, that God hath made in order to a lost sinner's returning to him and being saved. He should consider, therefore, the great question respecting his recovery; and then he will find that Jesus Christ is the grand answer to these questions: that *there is no name given under heaven whereby a man can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ;* the merit of Christ's suffering for sin, and the Spirit of Christ giving life to a sinner. This is the grand answer to all serious enquiry, as to the welfare of man.

Now his dreams afford nothing good on these points. They may put a man on a thousand superstitious practices, and may lead him to great corporal austerity; but what do they afford as to a satisfactory answer to the grand question?

2. The second thing we should consider, as to the vanity of human imaginations in religion, is not only as to what they afford men, *that* is nothing, but we should consider HOW MUCH THEY HINDER AND IMPEDE.

To illustrate what I mean. It is in vain to

talk of the Old World; or the state of the Heathens, and Jews, and Papists. Bring the subject to our present condition. It pleases God to appoint the preaching of the Gospel in a neighbourhood; that is, he opens a spring of life in a dry and barren place. But one man cannot attend, though he lives in the neighbourhood: and why? he leans to his imaginations: he has dreamed! he has dreamed! he is a Socinian, and cannot bear the doctrines taught in the Church of England. Another is a philosopher truly! he has turned his thoughts to the reason and fitness of things; and cannot attend to the plain and simple preaching of God's word, which calls him to lay down all imaginations, and reasonings, and be taught by his Great Parent, what is that religion which is acceptable to himself.

Consider, therefore, how much these imaginations stand in a man's way, and become stumbling-blocks to him.

And there is, besides, a perverse inference often drawn from these facts:—that, because men have sought out many inventions, and followed the vanity of their own and others' imaginations, therefore there is no truth in the Bible! Yet, remember, however men have entertained him, that *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days spoken unto us*

most plainly, expressly, powerfully, and affectingly *by his Son.*

II. Having seen the vanity of all human imaginations in religion, let us consider, secondly, the ENERGY OF SCRIPTURAL TRUTH.

This is most strikingly declared in the text. *Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord: and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?* Who then will sit down in despair? Or who will set the Almighty at defiance, as if he could not execute his purposes?

Turn your attention, Brethren, to the characters which I have just mentioned, as being led astray by the vanity of human imaginations: you will see the state of even these men, when scriptural truth prevailed among them. How did some of the Antediluvians walk with God, like Enoch! how did they follow him, like Abraham—not knowing whither they went! The same may be said of the Jews: when they hearkened to the Lord their God, and turned aside from their idols, how did one put a thousand to flight! how did the Lord go before them, opening their way! Take the Church of Rome:—what a glorious Church was the Church of Rome,—but when?—when it followed human imaginations in religion? no! it was a glorious Church, when the Apostle wrote his Epistle to the Romans: its faith *sounded throughout the world.*

Thus was it, too, among Protestants, when they first separated from the superstition of Rome, and followed the Word of God, instead of human imaginations: in purity and zeal they walked with God, and glorified him on the earth: they triumphed, not in their lives only, but in their deaths at the stake: but see them following vain imaginations, and, however they might reflect on the Papists' superstition, the Papists might pity them for denying the only Lord God who bought them.

When you see these men, therefore, under the influence and dominion of the word of God, and trace the effect of it on their hearts, how does it prove the truth of this passage—*Is not my word like as a fire?* Is it not *like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?*

The kingdom of God, says our Lord, *is like a grain of mustard-seed:*—too minute almost for perception: but let the seed be sown in the heart, and watered by the Holy Spirit, while the Sun of Righteousness shines upon it, and it shall grow up into a great tree, though invisible in its progress.

My thoughts, God says, by the prophet Isaiah, *are not as your thoughts: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts: for as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth*

and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. What is the chaff to the wheat?—the wheat shall be found to be substantial and nourishing: the fire shall penetrate, burn up the dross, and purify the gold: the hammer shall break the strong rock in pieces, and *shall accomplish that which I please.*

Consult facts, to ascertain this energy of divine truth.

Look into the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles; the Gospel of Truth, preached by poor and unlearned men, was *gladly received: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls! And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer.* Turn, also, to the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians: there you will see that the Word of God is nutritious, like wheat; penetrating and purifying, like fire; and powerful in its operation, like the stroke of a hammer.—*In whom,* says the Apostle, *ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise:* it was such an impression as was lasting. So, again, in the First Epistle to the

Thessalonians:—*Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.*

Many suppose that these things were peculiar to the Apostolic Times: a plain proof that they know not the true History of the Church, in every age. A man has seen very little of the power of religion, who has not seen marvellous consequences result even from a single hint, grounded on Scripture;—from a simple tract;—from a very feeble instrument speaking the truth of God.

I will venture to say more. Every true Christian on earth is a witness that God's word is substantial and nourishing, as wheat; that it is purifying and penetrating, like fire; and that it has come as with the stroke of a hammer, to break the hard and rocky heart. Such an one need not to be told the distinction between *chaff* and *wheat:* he will know that man's imaginations, however ingenious and learned, are not the means of converting his heart to God. He knows that the truth of God has tried his own heart: it has penetrated into its recesses: it has shewn him his own picture: it has softened what was once hard and unimpressible: it has purified his motives,—not his conduct only, for that may sometimes be done by *pride*—but it has purified his motives, so that he has been led to say as Joseph said on another occasion, *How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* it has at length converted

him, and *turned him from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* It is the energy, therefore, that accompanies the word, which *casts down imaginations,* and reasonings, and the strong-holds of sin and Satan; producing subjection to Christ, as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his Church: so that whether such an one has been a moral, decent, devotional character, like Lydia; or ferocious, like the Jailor; or dissolute, like the Corinthians; or self-righteous, like the Pharisees of old; or an idolatrous character, like the ancient Britons, from whom we sprang,—he has evidence in his own breast, that the preaching of Christ is *the power of God to the salvation of every one that believes.*

An objection may perhaps arise in the minds of some persons: "If God's word be like a fire,—one of the most powerful agents in nature; and if it be like a hammer, that breaketh even the rock in pieces; and it is sent forth among us; how is it, that many, who live under the express teaching of the word, have yet nothing like a broken heart, under this powerful hammer? how is it that they are living in a state of imposition on themselves; as if no purifying, penetrating fire had entered their hearts? how is it that they continue to dream, continue to prefer chaff to the wheat, or at least are careless whether it be chaff or wheat? how is this?"

I will answer by asking another question:—Is

not a hammer a powerful instrument? Will the strongest rock stand before the stroke of the hammer? but will the throwing of the hammer upon the rock do any thing, or throwing down the hammer before it? "No," you say, "certainly not: the hammer might lie for ever on the rock, or lie before it, yet the rock would remain unbroken, for the hammer needs a strong hand: the hammer can do nothing without a workman." So is it with the Word of God! So far is the fire from penetrating of itself the heart, or the hammer from breaking it in pieces, that the Apostle tells us, the preaching of the Gospel is, in some instances, *a savour of death unto death:* when the Gospel does not soften, it is sometimes known to harden. The preaching of Christ himself made the Pharisees fret, and conspire to put him to death!

Brethren! let us learn, that, as God must spread our table, and give an appetite for the food, and render it nutritious after it is received, so must it be with the precious Word of God. The Holy Spirit must not only kindle the fire, but he must apply it to the heart: the hammer must not only be in his hand, but he must strike with it; and when HE strikes with it, then even Legion shall come and sit down at Christ's feet, *clothed, and in his right mind:*—then Saul, who *breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the Church*, shall, under the operation of this fire

and this hammer, be sent forth making use of the same instruments; declaring that he can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth him, and that his word shall be the power of God to the salvation of every one whom the Holy Spirit enables to believe. Thus it is said in the cxth Psalm, *Thy people shall be willing*,—When? *in the day of thy power.*

Having endeavoured to shew you the Vanity of Human Imaginations, and the Energy of Scriptural Truth, let us learn TO FORM A JUST ESTIMATE OF TRUTH AND ERROR.

The truth, wherever God sends it, is no ordinary blessing. I will shew you his own account of it, in a remarkable passage in the eighth chapter of the prophecy of Amos. *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land*—and, surely, this is one of the heaviest afflictions that can be sent on man!—*not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:*—the sorest of all famines; because the word of the Lord, the hammer, the fire, is the grand instrument of God. While men of the world are admiring their books of science, or their books of amusement, God calls all this *chaff: What is chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?* They embrace these things too much as their portion: what dreams are these? *Oh, that thou hadst known*, says our Lord, weeping over Jerusalem, *Oh, that thou hadst known, at least in this*

thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! and the things that belong to our peace may be summed up in the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ; what he hath done for us in reconciling us to God, and what he hath promised to do by his Spirit in our hearts: for *This*, says he, *is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

Let us entreat God, then, that OUR ESTIMATE MAY BE PRACTICAL.

Let us learn, first, to form a just estimate: and let us then entreat God that it may be a practical one.

I must insist on this, because the text says, *He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.* How many are going in the broad road to ruin, with their heads filled with notions of truth! How many masters charge their servants to go and hear the Gospel; and, at the same time, set them an example of the word of God having no effect on the heart! How many servants seem to despise those above them, as though they did not know the truth; and, at the same time, bring disgrace thereon by their idleness, their evil tempers, and even dishonest habits, while they profess to know the Gospel of Christ! Let us pray, therefore, that our estimate of the Truth may be practical: for—with a carnal heart and a

gospel head, we should fall into the most fatal of all errors.

Oh! that the word of God may this day be as wheat, to nourish; as fire, to penetrate and discover; and as the hammer, to break the rocky heart in pieces! Grant, O God, that this word may not be *a savour of death unto death* to any! Grant that what is spoken this day to our outward ears, may be written upon every one of our hearts, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

SERMON XIII.

THE FIERY FURNACE.

DANIEL III. 24, 25.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the King was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his Counsellors, did not we cast three Men bound into the midst of the Fire? They answered and said unto the King, True, O King. He answered, and said, Lo! I see four men, loose, walking in the midst of the Fire; and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

THE Book of God abounds in wonders. This history exhibits one of them. A powerful and arbitrary king ordered an idol to be set up, and every one under his authority to bow down to that idol. But some men in his kingdom would not bow down. They durst not.

There is something in the Resolution of a servant of God, which may appear to be perverseness and obstinacy, and will be so called by the world: but it is enough if he knows it to be a zeal for God, a true fear, a determination not to go beyond his duty: he may then safely leave all possible consequences with God. He, who would not bow down, was the same hour to be cast into a burning fiery furnace. Yet there were

three men in the kingdom, who would endure even that consequence; and therefore they told the king plainly, *We are not careful*, or anxious, *to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve*, is *able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king: but, if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image which thou hast set up. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury—and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated—Then these men were cast into the burning fiery furnace.* Watching the process, the king, at length, *was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast, &c.*

I would collect from this Scripture the following Point of Doctrine:—WHATEVER TRIALS A SERVANT OF GOD MAY BE CALLED TO ENDURE, HE IS SUFFICIENTLY SUPPORTED UNDER THEM, BY THE ASSURED PRESENCE OF AN ALMIGHTY FRIEND.

I. A CHARACTER is here pointed out. It is the servant of God, a man of grace, a believer, who only can endure fiery trials.

There is a holy principle in such a man, which will enable him to endure every fiery trial.

It is difficult to describe in words the feelings of the heart; but we may insist on the principle called Grace, and Faith, and Zeal, and Love.

These are but different operations of the same principle. They are but like the different features of one particular person.

The Scriptures generally describe this principle as the Life of God in the Soul of Man,—the being made *partaker of a divine nature,—the new creature.* It is called *Grace*, because it is divine grace or favour, that implants it in the soul. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart: He opens the sinner's eyes: He shews him his natural condition: He points to the fulness of grace and mercy in Christ Jesus: He opens his ears, while a proclamation of mercy is made to him: He looses his tongue, and puts words into his mouth that he may make a good confession: He strengthens his hand, and gives him work to do,—hardening his breast like a flint, when called to endure trials.

When trials come in, therefore, like mighty waves, and threaten to overwhelm such a man as Lot, such a man as Joseph, such a man as Elijah, the principle of grace, the aid of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, enables them to press forward, in the face of all the obstacles which can be opposed to them by the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Trusting to an Almighty Power, and leaving the consequences in God's hand, these men can say, *We are not careful to answer in this matter.*

A Christian may be as much tried in the furnace now, as in any past age. Smithfield has

lighted up its fires to prove the principle of Grace. Babylon never tried Grace more, that this kingdom tried it, and still does try it. Many a private family has been a fiery furnace to a Christian.

There is, however, a principle implanted in the breast of a servant of God, which enables him to stand fast and abide all consequences. What a proof of this is before us! These three men determined to abide all consequences: but, at the same time, they determined to maintain the faith, and fear, and truth of God.

What instruction, then, is to be derived from this view of the passage? It says—"Expect trials: but fear them not. Shrink not on account of them. Think not your trials mightier than God is, to support you under them. Bow not down to the world's idols, that you may escape the furnace: you will not so conquer; but you will be conquered. *Think it not strange, concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you,* for it has been the appointed path in all ages. Expect it; and remember the promise, *Thy shoes shall be iron and brass: as thy day is, so shall thy strength be.* Tread *the footsteps of the flock;* and remember, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego."

Yet I must know but little of Christianity, if I did not know how much easier it is to preach on this subject, than to endure the fiery trial. I would ask, therefore, What is to be our support, when

God shall call us to a special trial? How are we to enter the furnace? What support shall we find there?

II. The SUPPORT of this sufferer is the second point which we may consider from this Scripture.

We shall see Christ in the furnace. *Lo! I see four men, loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.* He, who enters the furnace for the honour of Christ, shall meet Christ in the furnace.

A question here arises: "When does a man enter the furnace for the honour of Christ?"

A serious question: for there is no promise to the man who enters it in his own spirit; to gratify his pride, or to support a party. There must be a good cause to make a martyr. Why did these men enter the furnace? They might have escaped it, but it was set before them with a penalty: they must enter the furnace if they did not bow down to the idol. They were confident of safety, if they entered the furnace to avoid bowing down; but they were not sure of escaping a more dreadful furnace, if they did bow down. It was not for THEM, therefore, to turn, though the penalty was so tremendous. They entered thus the furnace for Christ: that is, as believers in the Messiah to come, as witnesses for God and his truth.

Here another question arises: Was this person, who walked with them, Christ?"

I answer, that *His goings forth were from everlasting—His delights were with the sons of men.* His visits were frequent in the old world, and his visible appearances many. It is said, *The* LORD *came down—The* LORD *appeared to Abraham—The* LORD *wrestled with Jacob—The* ANGEL OF THE LORD *conversed with Manoah,* but he gave signs of the divine character, that he was the Angel Jehovah. It is said, *The* LORD *talked with Moses and the elders of Israel;* yet our Lord told the Jews that his Father never was visible. *No man hath seen God at any time.* Who then was the *Lord,* that was then made visible? *Whose* goings forth were from everlasting? *Whose* delights were with the sons of Men? *Who* was the Lord that was tempted forty years in the desert? The Apostle tells us that they tempted *Christ* in the wilderness.

After his coming in the flesh, we find that he arrested Saul the Pharisee: *Saul, Saul, Why persecutest thou me?* And this same Saul, afterward in his temptation, which was his fiery trial, had no other resource than the grace of Christ. He was in the furnace with him.

It is manifest, therefore, that the person who conducted the whole Mosaic Dispensation was HE, *whose delights were with the sons of men*—GOD THE SON.

Whatever reasons, therefore, the king might have for saying, *The form of the fourth is like the Son of God,* whatever he might have learnt from the writings or reports of the Jews, and whatever might be his meaning herein, yet a Divine Person was found walking with these men: he, therefore, that entereth the furnace for Christ, shall find a Divine Person walking with him there.

Brethren, when you suffer, see that you suffer for Christ. This will be your honour. *Happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.* The promise is then to you—*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.* Here was this promise literally fulfilled.

I shall never forget the encouragement I received when I was a young man, and had just begun my ministry, when, standing by the dying bed of my mother, I asked her, "Do not you tremble at the thought of entering an unknown world? How do you know what you shall meet there?"—"It is no matter what I shall meet there. He hath said, *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt. I will strengthen thee: I will uphold thee.* That satisfies me!"

III. You may gather, thirdly, from this Scripture, the DELIVERANCE, which a suffering servant of God will obtain in fiery trials.

The fire, which makes fuel of every thing not prepared to enter it, only releases the believer, and burns his bonds.

"*I see*," says the King, "*four men* LOOSE! Did not we cast them in bound? The flame has had no effect on *them*, but it has burnt their *bonds*. Nay, I see them in the best of company: I see one walking with them like the Son of God."

I have always observed, that, if a man will cleave *with purpose of heart* to God, God will most peculiarly manifest to him his friendship when most peculiarly needed. *I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction—I will make thee a chosen vessel unto me.* Brethren, this declaration in the full meaning of it, is every day fulfilling. He has walked but a little while in Christianity, who has not seen this. Job was put into the furnace: night and day the man had no peace: he was to be tried in every extremity, except the loss of life. God will bring his followers into the fiery furnace, in order to glorify his name, by their support and deliverance.

Doubtless, he had it in view also to glorify himself, by exposing the idols which the king worshipped; and shewing, that, instead of being gods, they were but creatures in the hand of God.

Whatever, then, others may suffer in trials, if

we can enter into the furnace for Christ's sake, and look for his promised presence therein,—and learn to glorify his Great Name, what have we to fear? We may fear ease and self indulgence: we may fear worldly pleasure and wealth: a sense of our weakness will teach us how much we ought to fear that which is so suited to our corruptions: but, not a hair of the head shall perish, of those who suffer for his Name! Christ *will sit as a refiner;* and, when he puts us into the fire, we should say to him, "This trial, this fire, is thy servant. Command it to purify, and let my bonds be burnt thereby. Command it to burn up my lusts, my corruptions; and to set my soul at liberty."

Let us learn, then, Brethren, to stand in the spirit of these men; in the same spirit of dependence which they manifested: and, instead of fearing the trial, let us remember the awful consequences of the alternative.

IV. We may learn, once more, from this passage, that, when God sends to a man that support which he promises in the furnace of affliction, that man becomes a WITNESS for God:—an invaluable beacon, as it were, to a benighted world.

These men gave their testimony, doubtless, for their God: but there was something to be done. The most effectual sermon is sometimes preached by a providence. A minister may, with much

pains, make his point as plain as possible; yet men will feel unconcerned, till God speaks by a fact: and then they seem like persons just awakened.

Such was the case before us. Whatever these men had to say, it made no impression; but when the king saw the fact, *he rose up in haste, was astonished, and spake to his counsellors:*—men in utter darkness and ignorance, like himself, till this blaze of light burst on their consciences.

Oh, that men, who are so forward to preach to the world, would preach in wisdom! Let them *fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life.* Oh, that they would walk as the children of God through their trials!—That they would support their Christian Character, and demonstrate the reality of religion: then would they preach effectually; and shew the holy support which they receive, as a light in a dark world.

Experienced Christians have told me, that they were not so much convinced by a preacher, or a book; as by a fact: that they marked, and kept their eye on some humble, upright, pious Christian; living above the world, while greatly tried in it; and demonstrating that he was an overcomer of the world, by the principle of grace within him.

Brethren! if you are called into the furnace of affliction, above all take care with whom you walk there, and how you walk. If you enter the furnace in your own strength, much more from

fanaticism or obstinacy, you may suffer, and even be burnt up there: but, if you enter in a holy fear, to glorify God and to avoid sin, to be a light in a dark world, depending on divine promises, then will you enter according to the will of God, and you will overcome. The Christian will honour God, and he will be honoured by God.

Remember, too, that, wherever you walk, whether in the fire or out of the fire, many are looking on. Our steps are marked; and we are not only looked on by this world, but by other worlds. *We are come to an innumerable company of angels.* The Christian has spectators in heaven, earth, and hell; beholding how far he plays the man to the glory of his God.

Let us, therefore, see our journey through this world laid down in the conduct of these men. *On their bodies the fire had no power:* they lost *not a hair of their heads:* even *the smell of fire had not passed on them:* their bonds only were burnt: their God was honoured: they were taken to court, and their enemies were confounded.

But I am speaking to some who will not suffer for Christ: who will sooner bow down to the idol: who will not set their faces like a flint, but will seek the honour that cometh from men: who know nothing of this principle of loyalty to Christ: who do not call him Master: who do not ask their hearts, "What will Christ have me to do, now that he is gone?"—*He, that confesseth me not,*

saith the Saviour, *before men; him will I not confess, when I come in the glory of my Father.* If He is to be believed, who is *the faithful and true witness*, who has seen the whole of the invisible world, and whom alone we can safely trust for an account of it. He says, that if we pass not through the furnace of trial for his sake, we must pass into a *Lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* No comforter will there be to walk with you in that fire! No friend can there approach us more; nor can a wicked relation, without increasing the terrors of that forlorn abode! I beseech you, therefore, before that shall become your unhappy state, to think of these things: and may God command his blessing upon what has been said, that it may effectually awaken you!

SERMON XIV.

SIGNS OF TRUE WISDOM.

MATT. II. 1, 2.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him.

IT would be but trifling with your attention and wasting your time, to spend it in considering who these Magi were—whence they came—or what was the nature of this star. There is no more to be known on these subjects from this passage, than what appears on the face of it. Our grand concern is the moral instruction to be derived from this history.

The conduct of these *wise men* suggests to us some marks of illumination or true wisdom, wherever it is afforded to the mind of man.

A truly wise man is a very different character from a worldly wise man. A worldly wise man may satisfy himself and others with the extent of his knowledge, the discoveries which he has made in human science, and the comprehensive

view which he takes of public affairs: or he may take his walk among the stars, and measure their distances and relations: he may be called the illumination of the day, in the department which he occupies. But I would ask this grand question: Does he stand related to no world but this? —Has he a soul to be saved?—Is he a sinner?—Has he found a remedy for his guilt and misery?—Has he any thing to set his foot on at death, when called into another world? Nothing of all this! Then what wisdom is his? He is but as a child—provided a child is equipped for a day's amusement, it thinks nothing of the morrow!

Let us, then, consider the MARKS OF TRUE WISDOM, as they appear in the conduct of these men.

I. True Wisdom will teach a man to SEEK AN INFALLIBLE GUIDE, in this dark and dangerous world.

The wise man will follow the light of his dispensation. He knows that he has questions to ask, which God alone can answer. He cannot so much as know the object of his worship, till God teach him: for *who, by searching, can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?* Who can tell what it is fit for God to do with his creature, or how that creature may safely appear before him?

The Wise Men had but the light of a star; but they doubtless knew that it was a light which

God provided. They had a tradition, probably, that a star should arise to direct them to the Messiah. Balaam's prophecy might give rise to such tradition: but what particular knowledge they had of this star we are not informed; but it is sufficient for us to know that they had that knowledge.

II. True Wisdom will FOLLOW SUCH A GUIDE, whenever it appears.

The object to which such a guide leads may be at a great distance. Many impediments may be in the way: many objections may be found: puzzling questions may arise: it may be, at best, but star-light; but it is the only light afforded.

Let us learn thus to use our Bibles:—not to search for objections—not to try what questions may be started—not to examine what misconstructions may arise. Have you any other light? Are you not involved in total darkness, if that light be extinguished? True wisdom will follow star-light, when it has not that of the sun: it will be guided by true light, wherever that can be found.

To us, in this day, who are not called to follow shadows and dark ceremonies, but *with open face to behold the glory of the Lord*, as it appears *in the face of Jesus Christ*, the grand question is, What is the value of the object which we are pursuing? What is salvation? What shall I obtain

therein?—acceptance, pardon—purity—boldness before God! What a marvellous light!—what a blessed dispensation! How thankful ought we to be for this light! how willing to follow it; and to follow it simply—humbly—entirely!

Thus did these Wise Men: they came enquiring, *Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him.*

III. True Wisdom will HONOUR THE OBJECT WHICH IT HAS FOUND.

It will not listen to the objections of the scoffer, or unbeliever. Herod, and the Chief Priests, and all Jerusalem were troubled: but who were they? Their character explained their opposition.

Are you troubled, because you have in your families persons who sneer and scoff, and treat the Sabbath and the Gospel with contempt, and despise religious men because they are religious? How would you expect such scoffers to act? Is not their conduct in character? Has not God said, that *In the last days there shall arise scoffers, walking after their own lusts—speaking evil of things that they know not?*

Herod, and the Chief Priests, and all Jerusalem were troubled, because they loved darkness rather than light. But these men came to Jerusalem and enquired publicly, "*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?* We are come from a far

country, and we are determined to own and honour the object of which we are in pursuit."

Brethren! our enquiries may possibly disturb others; yet we must persevere. Ours is not an affair to be trifled with: it is of infinite moment! Let us be civil, and kind, and benevolent, and give no offence to Jew or Gentile, much less to the Church of God; but, in an affair of such infinite importance as salvation and the confessing of Christ before men, we must be simple and determined: we must say, with Joshua, *Choose ye whom ye will serve: but, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

IV. True Wisdom will continue to WAIT IN AN HUMBLE SPIRIT, FOR FURTHER DIRECTION.

This did the Wise Men. *They rejoiced with exceeding great joy, when they saw the star.* And when it had led them to the young child—*God manifest in the flesh*—they waited for further directions: *and, being warned of God in a dream,* they returned *into their own country another way.*

My Dear Hearers, we want daily instruction; yea, every hour of the day. We know not what a day may bring forth, nor what is contained in a single circumstance of the day, nor what mischief and danger may await us. The same care of God, in his Providence, which is necessary to our preservation in the most tremendous danger, is

equally necessary in the most unsuspicious circumstances.

The star had left these men: they had found their object; but they still enquired: they still needed direction: they waited, and God warned them what steps they should take, after they had found Christ. You may be a Christian of mature age, and able to instruct others; yet you need to pray continually, "*What I know not, teach thou me.* Let me hear thy voice, saying, *This is the way: walk ye in it; when I turn to the right hand, or to the left.*"

V. True Wisdom will teach a man CALMLY TO PURSUE HIS COURSE.

The wise man will hold on this way, regardless of the consequences which he expects to meet. He will hold on his way, and wax stronger and stronger.

Thus it was with Moses: he had great difficulties to encounter; but *by faith* he overcame: he went on his way, acted according to his rule, and left consequences with God. Thus these Wise Men, having seen *God manifest in the flesh*, felt that they had seen enough to prevent their being carried away by the fears or fables of the world. Never will any man be cured of that worst of disorders—the world in the heart—till he has by faith beheld the salvation of God in the work of Christ.

Let us, then, imitate these Wise Men: let us

keep the feast of the Epiphany, on the eve of which we now are, by admiring the condescension, grace, and goodness of God, to us Gentiles. *Arise! shine!* says the prophet: *for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. The people that sat in darkness, have seen a great light:* God has stooped down to our necessities. By the assistance of those ministers or friends, whom he raises up for us—by the books, which he brings to our hands—by the hints, which he occasionally affords us—by the good thoughts, which he suggests to the mind—he can conduct us, as he did these Wise Men, to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

1. My Christian Brethren! do you feel, at times, that the truth will not suffer you to rest in the course wherein you have been walking?—that, however various occurrences may seem to drive the truth out of your mind, yet it returns again; and that one passage of scripture after another calls loudly to your conscience?—This is as the shining of the star to the Wise Men: this is, as another scripture expresses it, Christ knocking at the door of your hearts! TAKE CARE HOW YOU TRIFLE WITH CONVICTION.

It is most awful to stifle conviction. Stifled conviction will rise again in the judgment to witness against you. If you spend your time, while reading the Scriptures, in searching for poetical

beauties or making critical remarks, you act as these Wise Men would have done, if they had sat down spectators of the phenomenon, but took no step in following it. We are not, as Mr. Boyle expresses it, to stand looking at the telescope-case, but to look through it: children may be amused with the case, but the astronomer uses the telescope as an instrument whereby to discover the wonders of the planetary world. Thus let us endeavour to use the light which God affords—not to amuse ourselves with it, but to make our way by it to the light of life.

2. If True Wisdom consists in seeking an infallible guide, following such a guide when it appears, confessing our object before men, waiting for further direction, and pursuing our course regardless of all consequences—if this be true wisdom, HOW BLIND AND WRETCHED ARE THEY, WHO HAVE NEVER TAKEN ONE STEP BY THE LIGHT AFFORDED THEM!

The man may be a King—so was Herod: but what use did he make of the circumstances in which he was placed? He may be a Scholar—so were the Sadducees and Pharisees: but what light had they? what discoveries did they make? He may be a Minister—so were the Chief Priests: and what did they do with this marvellous light? The man may be successful in his schemes and projects—so were Dives and Demas: but what

became of them? What wisdom had they? Can you conceive of men more beguiled of Satan than these men? The world may praise them: but what does God say of them? Let us hear his account, and listen to what we hear: *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost!*

Am I speaking to any who are yet sleeping, though so glorious a light is risen upon the earth? —I would say to such, What! does this light shine, that you may determine to sit in darkness, and pour contempt on it? What will you plead in the Great Day? You cannot say, like the benighted Chinese or Indian, "We were brought up in the darkness of idolatry. The light that was in us, was darkness." You must give account of these truths: and then you will find them to be *a savour of death unto death.*

3. If True Wisdom is here marked out and set before us, and recommended to our attention by the God of all wisdom, WHAT A BLESSED THING IT IS TO BE REALLY WISE—a truly godly man, enlightened and enlivened by this light!

For there is one Spirit, one light, one real character in all true Christians. Were these lights, which are shining round us to-night, to be multiplied into ten thousand times their number, they would be all of the same nature. So the grace of God, whether it work in Abraham, in Lazarus, or in any sinner at this day, is of the same nature still.

My Dear Hearers, let the world think of these things as they may. These Wise Men were treated, doubtless, with the utmost contempt in Jerusalem, when they came, enquiring, *Where is he, that is born King of the Jews?* And when they set out from their own country, it is probable they were regarded as madmen: the following of a star must have been accounted by their countrymen, as one of the wildest projects that ever entered the head of man. And when they fell down before the child, and offered gold and frankincense, whoever stood round and were not under the same gracious influence, would regard it as the most egregious trifling to pour out such gifts before a poor child, in the lap of a poor virgin, and in the meanest situation, under the idea that they were led by a star to pay that adoration.

You see now the opinions of the men of the world. Nothing can be gathered from them. Let us follow our rule, and leave consequences, as these Wise Men did. And how will these very men rise up in judgment against the curious traveller, the wise politician, the learned, the scorners and scoffers of every day, who pour contempt on our treasure—the most glorious object that God ever shewed to man—while they bring forward their little trifles—their shells and their pebbles—and summon the world to the admiration of them!

I call on you, therefore, to seek True Wisdom; that you may be of the number of those whom God calls wise, and will prove to have been such in the face of these scorners: for, *They, that be wise, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.* Let us be candidates for that glory; and let us remember, that no man ever sought in vain that honour which cometh of God.

SERMON XV.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

MATT. XVI. 1, 2, 3.

The Pharisees also, with the Sadducees, came: and, tempting, desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather; for the sky is red: and, in the morning, it will be foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

THE Pharisees and Sadducees were the formalists and infidels of that day. They came in a curious, unbelieving spirit,—a spirit never likely to receive any instruction: but they came in this spirit, desiring to see a sign, or miracle. Our Lord reproved this spirit: for he looked at the hearts of these men. He seems to have reproved them in this sentiment:—"Ye are observant in natural things: ye know how to read *the face of the sky;* but how is it that ye are so blind in moral considerations, that ye seem to know nothing at all of *the signs of the times?*"—or, as St. Luke expresses it, in the twelfth chapter of his Gospel, "*How is it that ye do not discern this time?*

Why do not ye understand your dispensation? Why, like children, do ye want to see something that shall meet your curiosity, in this idle and unbelieving spirit? You see enough, if you could read what you see. Why do you not perceive that the kingdom of God is among you?—that Christ, the Son of God is come and hath eternal life. *Having eyes, ye see not!* You look at the skies, and learn to read them; and why do you not read the signs and tokens of your times?"

We are here taught, therefore, that a conscientious man will endeavour, so far as he is able, to read the Signs of his Time.

I shall endeavour to point out,

1. THE SIGNS OF OUR TIMES.

2. WHAT THESE SIGNS SUGGEST IN REGARD TO OUR DUTY.

I. Let us enquire, WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF OUR TIMES.

1. As they proceed from GOD.

He hath afforded us a singular Dispensation of Grace. He hath put us in a capacity of being delivered from our sins, in their guilt and power. He hath set before us a refuge: *that we, being delivered from our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives.* He hath set forth *a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us:* by this way we have access to God.

Not only is this special privilege a Sign of our Times, but God has evidently a contention with Europe, under its awful neglect of this dispensation of mercy. *The Lord is doing his strange work.* He hath evidently *risen out of his place*, as the Prophet expresses it. I cannot adequately speak on this subject: it must overwhelm you. He brings vast armies to nothing! *The mighty men do not find their hands!* The most unexpected vicissitudes take place—such as we cannot match in history! The valiant expire in the arms of victory!*

Consider more particularly our condition as a nation. How long have we been threatened with an overwhelming invasion! Every preparation has been made, and yet how has it been delayed! How have the arms of our enemies been chained! What a train of victories mark the history of the present times! Nor ought it to be forgotten, that God has caused his name to be owned in those victories. What patience and long-suffering has God exercised toward us, under great provocations! It seems to have been said concerning us, as it was concerning the fig-tree, *Spare it yet a little longer.*

Such are the Signs of the Times, as they proceed from God.

* This Sermon was preached soon after the intelligence arrived of the Victory of Trafalgar, and the death of Lord Nelson.

J. R.

2. Let us turn to the consideration of these Signs, as they proceed from MAN.

It will be much too large a field to enter on the atrocious and audacious infidelity of the times—to say nothing of the contempt, or at least the neglect, of the dispensation of grace under which we live—to say nothing of the worldly spirit of speculation, and the multiplied efforts after gain—to say nothing of the affectation, the consequence, and the extravagance which pervade all orders; and the impurity and insubordination of spirit, diffused over the world. I pass by these general sins, to mark one; and that one appears to me to be the most awful of all sins—I mean THE MORAL INSENSIBILITY OF THE TIMES!—the Moral Insensibility!—for if, while God is contending with the careless and wicked world, which despises the dispensation of his grace, Christendom still continues overwhelmed in its sins, I cannot understand how the stroke is to cease. Is it not sent to scourge Christendom, till there appears something like moral sensibility?—till the sinner is disposed to cry, *I have sinned?*—till some shame is felt for our insulting contempt of the Son of God's coming down from heaven *to bear our sins in his own body on the tree?* I cannot understand how the stroke should cease, till this moral sensibility appears!

One, who has not looked into this matter, might perhaps be ready to say, "What can

you mean by Insensibility? The greatest sensibility prevails at this very time. Every idea seems to be called home. Every one speaks feelingly of the extraordinary intelligence of the last week. The whole conversation turns on this subject!"

All this is quite natural. Shall a man spend his life in such a cause, and expire under the circumstances of such a victory, without awakening our feelings? Shall such a check be given to our inveterate enemy, and no sensation of thankfulness arise even in the most insensible? But—has it never been heard, that one died, not for his friends, but for his enemies? Is there no instance of a glorious victory, accomplished over the world, sin, and hell, by the death of that one who came from heaven, and was equal with the Father, yet came to lay down his life for sinners? That people, who are full of feeling on the present occasion, have perhaps scarcely in their lives ever thought or spoke or would even bear to hear of these things,—is not this Moral Insensibility?

What is said in the eighth chapter of Jeremiah, seems to me exceedingly like the present Signs of the Times:—*I hearkened, and heard; but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but*

my people know not the judgment of the Lord—God is not in all their thoughts?

What says our Lord, in the eleventh chapter of St. Luke? *The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* I would add, that the seaman, who summoned his sailors to prayer, acknowledged that God's arm was strength, and that victory was his, shall rise up in judgment with many in this generation!

II. We have marked a few of the prominent Signs of the Times: let us now consider to what DUTIES these views should lead us.

1. They should lead us to RECOLLECTION.

A man must have made but little observation, not to see how much multitudes resemble thoughtless sailors; who, when a wreck is going down, will satisfy themselves with some momentary gratification; and, though eternity is before them, let them but have this, they think nothing of death and the terrors of hell. My Dear Hearers, man's grand concern is with his eternal state. It is not the moment of life—it is not the first

stage of his existence—it is what he is to be for ever—it is what God thinks of him, and what he thinks of his God. This is the grand concern: for, till he lives thus by faith, he is a mere child, trifling with the occasions of the day:—What is the news? What shall amuse his attention? What is the thing that he shall call very important in its place? But if, after all this, while this important concern, or that important concern, is occupying his mind, the man himself totally forgets his condition—forgets his character as a sinner—forgets the provision of grace, and the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—what is this man, but, like one of the poor perishing sailors, amused with a momentary gratification? Little does such a man understand the Signs of the Times. He may be amused with the face of the sky, and may very skilfully investigate appearances there, and furnish himself with matter of conversation,—but he will not know the Signs of the Times.

2. These signs point out to us also the duty of PRAYER.

It is in this way, that we transact with heaven: this is God's appointment: it is our duty; and, therefore, he, who rightly understands the Signs of the Times, will say, as the Prophet saith, "*Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down!* Oh, that thou wouldest set to rights, that which is wrong!—

that thou wouldest put a stop to this bloodshed and misery! Oh, that thou wouldest say to these proud waves 'Peace!' for thou only canst say it."

Such a man is standing, like Aaron, between the living and the dead: like Abraham, he is interceding for us before the throne of God.

3. The Signs of the Times point out THAT PROVISION FOR SOUL AND BODY, WHICH EVERY MAN IS CALLED TO MAKE IN SUCH TIMES; not knowing what vicissitudes, troubles, and extremities he may have to encounter.

He was a wise man, who said, "I see warfare and misery spreading over the earth; and it may bend its course shortly toward me: but *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower: and will watch to see what he will say unto me; and what I shall answer when I am reproved.* I will be in a position to meet every event."

This is true wisdom; and to this the Signs of the Times particularly urge us: that, when the Son of Man comes in his providence, we may have nothing to do but to meet him.

4. The Signs of the Times point out to us, AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S GOODNESS AND SPECIAL MERCY.

God is now saying, as it were, "Chain up, a little longer, the force that has been prepared against that land!" It is as though he said to the enemy, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.*

Let us, then, look up to God, that he would make *the wrath of man to praise him*; and that he would *restrain the remainder* of that wrath. Surely, if there is any nation on the earth that has special benefits to acknowledge, sparing mercies to record, and high privileges which it has long enjoyed, it is England! Let us, therefore, beseech God to give us a deep sense of his mercies.

My Dear Hearers, you may remember, that our Lord divides the world into what he calls *the children of this World*, and *the children of Light*.

I would improve this subject by addressing both these classes.

1. I will speak to those, who are the CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD.

You have perhaps often looked out to discern the face of the sky, and the posture of affairs. No one, perhaps, will deny that you are men of sense, or that you are men of science, and perhaps men of great information: but yet suppose, that, in conversing with you, it was to be found, that you did not know *the day of your visitation:* that you knew nothing of the spiritual or moral considerations, or signs of your times; that you had made no provision to meet God or eternity—I know not a more deplorable sight on earth, than you exhibit? I know not a more affecting sight, than a man of sense and science, a man looked up to, a man who not only admires himself but is univer-

sally admired; and yet is a fool, an idiot, in the sight of God! for he has not at all concerned himself about the *one thing needful—the better part*, that shall never be taken from him!

The astronomer, who was examining the heavens, stumbled, because he did not regard his steps: what are men who are conversant only with the prospects of this world, which pass away like a dream? What are men, who engage in no commerce, but in that of temporal affairs; and in no science, but what respects the moment?

Oh, that thou hadst known, and wouldst consider, *at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace*, before *they are hid from thine eyes!* for, *this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.*

While, then, you are considering, the late victory, and swallowed up in its importance, Oh that you would lay to heart also, that, unless you *overcome by the blood of the Lamb* and the power of his Spirit, it will only be a ground of lamentation to you to all eternity, that you heard the Gospel, that its privileges were afforded to you, and that, like the fig-tree, you were cultured and manured in vain! for God saith of his ancient people, *You, of all nations upon the earth, have I known: therefore will I punish you.* May you lay this to heart; and pray earnestly to God, that you may *know the day of your visitation*, the *Sign of your Times, and the things that belong to your peace.*

2. CHILDREN OF LIGHT! you have prayed for your country! Your prayers have been answered! it is yet preserved! God hath stretched out his arm, in its defence: and therefore you have been encouraged to persevere in prayer. Cease not, but still pray. Beg of him to put forth his mighty arm; and to supply that strength and wisdom, which man cannot supply.

While others scorn your principles, and misunderstand you, and are not concerned in your griefs, remember, that, in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel, a grand distinction is made between those who lament over the evils of the times, and those who do not.

God is evidently doing a strange work in the earth, far beyond our comprehension. It would be mere vanity to conjecture his designs. Yet your duty is plain:—*Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men, that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth, and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. Be ye, therefore, ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*

This it is, to know the true Signs of the Times. This it is, to be found in your place. This it is, to be ready to meet every event. And, that it may please God to influence your hearts to this end, I most earnestly beseech him for his infinite mercy's sake! Amen.

SERMON XVI.

DUTY OF WATCHFULNESS.

MARK XIII. 35, 36, 37.

Watch ye, therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.

AS, in a General Dispensary, there are medicines for all cases; so in the Grand Moral Dispensary of the Scriptures, while there are recipes for particular complaints, there are some which are always suitable, always in season. The text is one. Whether a temporal event of great importance is approaching—whether an event extremely momentous, like death, is at hand—whether the day is coming, which is eternally to determine our state,—more suitable counsel cannot be given, than that which is given in the text. *Watch!* for *the master of the house cometh:* if he finds you sleeping, he finds you in a state of perdition. And that which may be said to any particular class of persons, about to meet such an event as the destruction of Jerusalem, may be said

to every one ready to meet a still greater:—*What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.*

1. Let us notice the WARNING here given: *The Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch;* for he will shortly return.

2. Let us regard the CAUTION: *Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.*

3. Let us attend to the MEANS which we should use, lest we should be found sleeping: *What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.*

I. Let us notice the WARNING here given.

No man, but those pitiable creatures, Infidels and Scoffers, questions for a moment whether death and judgment stand before him; and therefore he cannot for a moment doubt whether this warning is not of the last importance. Though there are many remarkable periods in the life of man, though there are many surprising vicissitudes and revolutions in states and kingdoms, yet what are they all to this?

Death and judgment are inevitable, surprising, and sudden. Whether a man thinks of it or not, things are in progress—the day is coming on—the decree is past: and though, *of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven,* still it is as certainly fixed as the day in which God created man.

I do not intend to dwell on this part of my subject. The idea of the Day of Judgment is firmly fixed in the mind of every thinking man. Yet it is too grand for his comprehension. When, therefore, the poet, the orator, or the painter attempts to exhibit to us the terrors of that day he must fail. The description best calculated to meet the comprehension of man, is given by our Lord, when he speaks of a king coming and separating all nations, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats: placing the sheep at his right hand, and the goats at his left, he says to the one, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;* and, to the other, *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!*

Great use may, however, be made of this awful event, however incapable we are of describing it in detail. Let us give it prominence in our minds, when we would ascertain the weight and worth of the things of time.

I hear reports flying through the world. One says, "This is great: that is noble." Another says, "This or that is of vast importance." But if we would know what is the real value of these things, let us apply them to the standard. Bring those things, which are deemed vast and noble, to the test of the Great Day: how insignificant is every thing called great in this world!

But, as Death leaves a man, so Judgment must find him. As one single moment, therefore, may

place us in our final state,—as, this very night, our souls may be required of us,—as God has not said to the holiest of his servants, "Thou shalt live an hour," nor "Thou shalt live a minute;" we may feel the force of this general warning in the text, *What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch:* for *the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye, therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the House cometh.*

Brethren! multitudes have heard this warning in this place, who are now in full possession of the fact: they now experimentally know these things to be true. Could we ask these persons their sentiments, now that they have entered the eternal world by death, and stand waiting ready for the judgment to come, is there one of them, think you, who would come forward, and say, "While I was living on earth, the preacher was too urgent: he was too close on the conscience?" Is there one of them, who sees not now the vast importance of a single Sabbath, or of a single sermon? Is there one who would not consider neglect of the Bible as the greatest act of rashness, of which a rational creature could be guilty?—That God should speak to man, and that man would not hear him! Is there one, who would not consider a Throne of Grace as of the highest

concern—to have an opportunity of speaking to God? Or do you imagine that any complain that, while living, they watched too painfully?

Oh, let us listen to this warning, given to us by our Blessed Master and Redeemer. In love to the souls of men it was, that he left this warning behind him.

II. Let us notice the CAUTION: *Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.*

I cannot suppose that there is one of my hearers, who will mistake the meaning of the expression, and think that it is to be taken in a literal sense. The man, who is truly alive to God, will be ready to meet his God, though, while asleep in his bed, the *heavens* should *melt with fervent heat*, and *pass away with a great noise.*

The expression is a metaphor taken from sleep. The Scriptures speak of the careless and the wicked as of one asleep, who pays no attention to the most important concerns around him. For instance: a man may find his house safe—all calm and quiet: he retires—lays him down on his bed with great satisfaction—falls into refreshing sleep, as he has done innumerable nights before. While he sleeps safely and sweetly, perhaps a robber plunders the house: he is insensible of the injury: he is asleep! The robber may enter his chamber, and may put a knife to his throat; but the man sleeps on! He may set the house in flames—

the man sleeps on! no sense of danger! Or a mighty wind may shake the house to the foundation—but he sleeps on! I said that the sleeper was all this time insensible: but possibly he may not be wholly so; for, though unconscious of his danger, he may be running abroad in delightful dreams—advancing to honour—abounding in wealth—entering into some scene of pleasure—or standing on some rock, where nothing can touch him!

How faithful a picture is this of Carnal Security! —what our Lord here speaks of as the master of the house *coming suddenly*, and finding his servants *sleeping*. In this precise state does the thoughtless sinner stand. All the great promises of this book are nothing! Its awful threatenings are all as nothing! Though Satan is ruining and destroying him, and flames are about to surround him, yet he is insensible,—he dreams of nothing but honour, or riches, or pleasure!

Would the enemy of such a sleeper wish him to be disturbed? "No! let him sleep on; for sleeping will be his destruction. Make no noise! Shake not his bed! Let him rest and sleep on!"

Nay, the poor stupid sleeper would not bear, perhaps, to be roused: he would be offended and feel insulted, if a friend were to alarm him. Is not this the case with every careless sinner? No one offends more than the friend, who would awaken and rouse him, and alarm his conscience.

Let me ask another question:—Would not the real friend of every such sleeper rouse him, whatever might be the consequence?—though he should put him to pain—though he should excite evil tempers—though he should be thought guilty of rudeness? "Yes!" says he: "at any rate I will awake him: for, if he is not roused, he is lost for ever! Tell me not of rudeness. Tell me not of the late time of the night. I must awake the man, or he is for ever lost."

Our Lord lays the stress on coming *suddenly: lest, coming* SUDDENLY, he find you sleeping. And, though a man may not be arrested by what is called sudden death; though death may begin in what is called "a slight cold;" yet death has entered the house: he cannot be bribed: he cannot be driven away: he goes forward; and the man is but a dead man, though he appears to be slightly indisposed: death has entered the house, and that slight indisposition will lead on to a fatal close!

My Dear Hearers, I am speaking of plain facts. Here are no disputable doctrines: here are no nice points of discussion: this is broad ground which respects every man on earth. And if young men sleep at their posts, and if old men sleep on the brink of the grave, shall we administer opiates to them? Do they not need, *Awake! thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light?* Oh, may every such

sleeper be roused to cry, *Open thou mine eyes, O Lord, lest I sleep the sleep of death!*

In such a case as this—infinite in importance—evidenced by daily facts—not one of us secure of life for a moment—every man standing on the brink of eternity—how valuable is wise counsel! And such counsel we have from Christ: for these are his words: *Take ye heed: watch, and pray:* Was it needful that his hearers should be thus warned on the approaching destruction of Jerusalem?—of how much more importance is the warning to us, who must soon witness *the heavens and the earth passing away with a great noise, and the elements melting with fervent heat,* and the *great white throne* set up in the heavens?

When death comes on a man, and lodges him in a state in which he must meet judgment, then he will experimentally find that *the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch,* for he would shortly return. *Take ye heed,* he says, *lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.* To a man awakened by grace, sudden death will be sudden glory; but take heed, lest he come and find you sleeping and dreaming.

III. This leads us to the third consideration: the MEANS which we should use, lest we

should be found sleeping. *Watch! for ye know not when the Master of the House cometh.*

This counsel is exactly suited to our state and condition: for who is able to meet the snares with which we are surrounded, and which are far above even his comprehension? Who is able to meet the temptations of a practised veteran in destruction, like Satan? Who can understand even his own wanderings? Who can avoid the various errors flying around him, which would *deceive, if it were possible, the very elect?* What, in such a case, is suited to our character and circumstances? I answer, Exertion—Vigilance—a mind in arms—" A military discipline of thought" —ever awake—ever ardent for the truth. This becomes the man!

I would here correct a mistake, with which some good men distress themselves. In proportion as men are anxious, they are apt to be jealous. The careless fear nothing: the presumptuous despise danger: but it is the watchful who are frequently found fearful, lest they should be found wrong.

" Oh, says such an one, " I see such an event before me. I see my precious soul at stake. *What shall it profit me, if I gain the whole world, and lose my own soul? or what shall I give in exchange for my soul?* Every thing else is comparatively nothing. When I look on the world, and see what men are doing, I see it to be a miracle

of grace, that God should deliver me from their infatuations. They think of nothing: their talk is vanity: they are magnifying straws and atoms: they are like children at play, while that precious soul of man, which must live with God, or with condemned spirits for ever, is disregarded."

Now this man is fearful, lest he should be off his guard; lest he should lose his impressions; lest he should get too much into the spirit of the world; lest he should be carried away by its vanities. To such an one, therefore, I would say—"You are in no danger, while you are anxious. While watching, you may be alarmed: you may fancy that the enemy will rush on you with more power than will be given him: you are ever anxious: and this is the work of God, to keep you awake in the midst of a dreaming world."

"How, then," say you, "can we perceive when there are morbid symptoms, in such a case as this?"

I answer—When you see a man at perfect ease on this subject—when you hear any one talk presumptously, that, by-and-by, he will think of repentance, prayer, and watchfulness—when you hear an old man stubborn, and conceited of his zeal in religion because he has some right notions. Do you observe a person, who, instead of seriously thinking of our Lord's declarations, says, "This is alarming! I cannot bear it! It gives me offence". that man is in a morbid state. Do you hear ano-

ther say, "*Let me go, first, and bury my father: I have married a wife:* I have something else first to do?" these are morbid symptoms.

Yet, though we are expressly charged to be on our watch, let us not mistake, as if THAT were sufficient: for, however we may put ourselves on exertion, our vigilance, if we are left to ourselves, will fail. The most active and vigilant General has been sometimes ensnared in an ambush, or blown up by a mine insidiously prepared under his feet. Vigilance, alone, will not save! Our Lord has therefore said, *Watch and pray.*

Here is the patience of the saints, in carrying their petitions, day after day, to their Great Lord. Here is their wisdom: knowing their weakness, their petition is, "*Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe:* keep me, and I shall be kept: enable me to watch, and I shall watch. But, if thou leavest me a moment, I fall." Here is the strength of the saints: here they are taught of God to suspect every exertion they can make.

In a word, Brethren, while our Lord gives us counsel in this most important concern, he tells us, at the same time, to remember that nothing is done to purpose in Christianity, till we give him the whole glory of sending the truth, and of giving efficacy to it by the power of his Holy Spirit. This is peculiar to his character. I can speak to you, but I cannot infuse a principle. The Apostle could say, *I would to God that ye were altogether*

such as I am, except these bonds: but the Apostle could not give grace, to render them such who heard him: but our Holy Master, who taught these truths, can give the grace, and must have all the glory; so that from beginning to end, from first to last, we must sing *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood!*

We must cry after him, then, as he passes by in his ordinances. Like the leper, we must call on him, *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us:* or, as the sick of the palsy, we must look to him to say, *Arise: take up thy bed and walk.*

I will only add this remark, that there is such a thing—and I would to God that I had not both seen and heard of it in many instances, and marked its direful effects too—there is such a thing as Spiritual Quackery, as well as Medical Quackery; such a thing as healing the hurt slightly; imposing on the sick man; *daubing the wall with untempered mortar, and crying Peace, Peace.* That we should not be deceived in a matter of such importance as this before us, here stands the Great Physician of soul and body. "I give you," as if he had said, "a plain account of what is coming on, and plain counsel how to meet it. You must hope to get forward through time into a blessed eternity, by faith and patience, by watchfulness and prayer." And, though it may be scorned by the proud and slighted by the

ignorant, yet I pray God that you and I may remember this counsel of Jesus Christ, who best knows how to preach his own gospel. "This," says he, "is the method which I set before my disciples. Since they know not when their time ends, since I come suddenly like a master who has taken a far journey from home, let them watch and pray. *What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.*"

My Dear Hearers, I may be called in a moment to render an account of the advice which I am now giving to you; and nothing but the special hand of God prevented my being called to give account of my ministry before this day*: but, if I am spared a little longer to speak these words after my Master, let us pray that his grace may rest on us; and that both Minister and People may stir up one another; and that, in the day of his coming, instead of finding us sleeping, our lights may be burning, our loins girded, and we ourselves like men who wait for the coming of their Lord.

* This Sermon was preached soon after Mr. Cecil had escaped imminent danger of death, by his horse falling in frosty weather in the street.

J. P.

SERMON XVII.

THE ANGELS' SONG.

LUKE ii. 13, 14.

And suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the Heavenly Host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good Will towards Men.

IT is a lamentable consideration, how little man is disposed to consider those special and important truths, which God has revealed to him for his benefit.

In respect to the passage before us, for instance, a Philosopher reads it:—"Now," says he, "let us enquire whether this was an impression made on the minds of these shepherds, or whether it was an actual vision presented to them:" and thus he spends his time in empty speculations. A Painter reads the passage:—"I could very much wish," says he, "that I had been there, to have caught an idea from that scene." A Musician reads it:—"I should exceedingly like," says he, "to have heard this harmony, and to have examined how far it agreed with our present rules:" but

since this is impossible, he sits down, turns it into music, and puts it into a song; not considering what important lessons it contains. A Critical Divine reads it:—" This," says he, " is a singular event; and it will lead me to consider the ministry of angels, and whether it has totally ceased in our day or not."

Thus men trifle with the Word of God! A real Christian alone makes a proper use of such a passage. He asks his conscience, " What am I to learn from this? What instruction and encouragement does it afford?"

I shall treat it only in this way: I speak, therefore, only to such as have ears to hear to that purpose.

1. Let us CONSIDER THE PASSAGE, AS IT LIES BEFORE US IN THE HISTORY.

2. Let us improve it by SOME PRACTICAL REMARKS.

I. Consider the HISTORY before us.

The Evangelist informs us, that, on the birth of Christ, *There were in the same country shepherds, abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.* Business, you see, is honourable. Moses was in his employment, when the vision was manifested to him in the bush. David was in his employment, when called to a kingdom. Elisha was at the plough, when called to be a pro-

phet. God puts honour on that employment, which is lawful and innocent.

The Evangelist informs us also, that *the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.* An angel once cut off one hundred and forty-four thousand men, in one night: no wonder, therefore, that these shepherds were alarmed at the presence of an angel.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not! for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord:—a SAVIOUR—one who can perfectly emancipate you from the snares and power of Satan; who can deliver you from the guilt and dominion of sin, and from the fear and power of death. "*To* YOU *is born,* not to US;" as if the angel had said: "We are honoured with bearing the message, but we have no interest in the truth: we are not fallen creatures. *To you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* Each word is truth: therefore you may give it unlimited confidence. There is almighty power, for you to rest on; able, therefore, to bear you up through time and eternity. His heart is love: he comes, therefore, to lay down his life for you. And he is Christ the Lord: *God with us:* he, whose *name,* is *Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace: to you,*

therefore, *is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*"

But where is this Saviour to be found?—Not in kings' courts: not in the schools of science: not in the seats of merchandize: but *this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.* In a manger!—What dark saying is this? *Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger!* And it is as though the angel had said, "Remember that this will prove a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek. This is the appointed Saviour, set forth to be *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*"

Moreover, that such an one should come lying in a manger—God as well as man—this should raise the hope of man. That God will come as a worm, become acquainted with man, that he might enter into his sorrows—this should raise the hope of man. *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host:* for, *are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation?* When the foundations of the earth were laid, *the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy:* and when the earth was redeemed, it was to be expected that a multitude of angels would attend this gracious work: a multitude of angels did attend, and they sung the song

most appropriate to the occasion, *Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace, good-will to men.*

To bring *glory to God*, is to manifest his perfections: thus, when a man prays to God, he glorifies him; for he sets forth his praise as the hearer and answerer of prayer: when a man praises God, he glorifies him; as he sets him forth as the object of adoration.

Now in the work of Redemption, there was a peculiar display of the glory or perfections of God, in that he manifests his mercy and grace: he would spare no expense to recover fallen man: he would give *his only-begotten Son*, that the law might be magnified in his death. Christ manifested the Justice of God: the cup could not pass from him. He manifested his Wisdom: that wisdom which could, at once, put the utmost indignity and punishment on sin, while it saved the sinner. His Faithfulness and the exceeding riches of his Grace are displayed in Christ: he hath thereby brought greater glory to himself than by the making of ten thousand worlds, which would have been mere objects of his power.

The heavenly host, therefore, sung *Glory to God in the highest;* implying that the brightest display of the divine glory is in this work of redemption. And they sung, *Peace on earth:* as as if they should say, "There may be now a solid and soul-satisfying state of peace between the Sinner and the Judge. Christ, the peace-maker,

is come: a firm ground is now laid for peace between man and man, between law and conscience, between Jew and Gentile: and, now, may discord and misery cease, happiness and prosperity go forth as the highest expression of God's good-will to man! may it extend through the world!" It is the express work, therefore, of every minister of the Gospel, according to the Apostle, to declare that *God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself:* and so sung the angels at the birth of Christ. We therefore, are ambassadors, to bring these things to your ears. *We bring you glad tidings: to you is born a Saviour! Glory to God in the highest: peace on earth: good-will towards men!*

II. Let us now make some PRACTICAL REMARKS on this subject.

It has been observed with truth, that when an illiterate man becomes pious, receives the fear and the love of God into his heart, his perception is raised: he acquires a better moral discernment: he is exalted by his religion: he attains a right taste. The Gospel is directly calculated to produce these advantages. Now it is of great importance, surely, that we form a solid judgment of the world in which we live, while it is but a passage to the world to which we are going. Let us consider the text in this view.

1. Let us consider, if this be the song, and taste,

and sentiment of heaven, WHAT IS THE TASTE AND SENTIMENT OF THE MEN OF THE EARTH, WHO CALL THEMSELVES WISE, AND CALL US FOOLS FOR BELIEVING THE BIBLE?

Here is a standard. We can form no right opinion without a standard. Here is one. Angels descend, and sing, and declare what is the taste and song and sentiment of heaven. Here is a standard: and we must compare with this standard the taste and song and sentiment of the men who call themselves enlightened,—men of sense and learning.

If this, then, is to be the standard—and surely it ought to be—it clearly appears that the taste and sentiment and prevalent maxims of such men are utterly wrong—and that man is in a fallen and ruined state. Here is a remedy proclaimed, of the noblest kind, for time and for eternity: and what do men say concerning this remedy?—what regard do they pay to it?—how do they treat it, and those who trust in God through it? Brethren! you know how they speak: you see how they act: and we are compelled continually to adopt the prophet's exclamation, *Who hath believed our report?*

But, while you have now heard the taste and song and sentiment of angels, let us consider that angels know the worth of an immortal soul; and what it is for such a soul to be redeemed, and

that in harmony with the glory of God. Angels know the vanity of this dying and wretched world. Angels know the misery of hell: they know the worm that never dies, and the fire that never will be quenched. Angels know the glory, and taste, and song, and sentiment of heaven: and therefore it was impossible, if an angel was to express his sentiments on this subject, that it should be in any other language than that of the text.

This is the mind of heaven—the mind of God! Consider, then, what is the state of that mind, which opposes or neglects these glad tidings. You cannot appeal to such a mind: the man is blind, and miserable, and stripped of all that can be called excellent. Should any such person be present, I can only say, Awake from thy sleep—thy death! Awake from these dreams of comfort or happiness in the world! It is impossible you should be under a greater infatuation, than to seek the living among the dead.

2. We learn from the song of these angels, that NO GOOD-WILL FROM HEAVEN CAN BE COMMUNICATED TO MAN, NOR ANY PEACE ON EARTH, BUT WHAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE GLORY OF GOD.

For they sung, *Glory to God in the highest:* then, *peace on earth, good-will towards men.* That must be in Christ—in submitting to the Gospel:

for there is no good-will to men nor peace on earth, but in a way honourable to God, and consistent with his glory.

A sinner cares not for the honour and glory of God, nor heeds what outrages are committed on the Divine Government: "Only," says he, "let "me have peace and enjoy good!" What! in defiance of the Just Governor of Heaven and Earth?—But *Mercy and truth* must *meet together:* they do meet together in redemption. *Righteousness and peace* must *kiss each other:* they do kiss each other in this scheme of redemption; but on no other scheme: so that St. Paul might well say, *If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.* Christ came to make peace in a way honourable to God: he bought that peace: he bequeaths it: he gives it freely. Let then the sinner wage war no longer against God and conscience, but thankfully accept the inestimable gift.

You, who, at present, stand at a distance beholding these blessings with indifference, or trying to kindle some sparks of enjoyment—something to render you happy without Christ and redemption—without God's peace and good-will towards men—remember, that, while God meets your condition and stoops to your necessities, is manifest in flesh, stands at the door and knocks, and says, *Ho! every one, that thirsteth, come ye to the waters*—while he does this, do you think that

your trampling on these blessings and neglecting so great salvation, will not meet its due reward? Do you suppose there is no justice or truth in the government of God?—that all order will be destroyed, that you may be excused? I would call on you this night, in compassion. God invites all that thirst to come to the waters. I pray that the Holy Spirit may open the eyes of your understanding, that you may no longer judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life; for, while you linger, Satan is gaining his grand point; and God is perhaps about to say in his wrath, *They shall never enter into my rest.*

3. It appears from the language and song of the angels, that HEREIN ARE AFFORDED SUFFICIENT ENCOURAGEMENT AND DIRECTION TO EVERY BELIEVING HEART.

Here are the premises: what is the inference?—If a multitude of angels descend, and sing *Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, and good-will towards men:* if they come, and declare on God's authority, that there is glory brought to God in the highest by the redemption of Christ, a proclamation of peace on earth, and the utmost expression of good-will to men: what is the inference?—that a man should go home, saying, "I know not how I can be saved! My sins are like crimson, therefore there is no such thing as washing them away! I believe that only the elect will be saved!"—and so—just as Satan would

have it—they are turning the counsel of God against themselves. But, Brethren, here is a plain passage of Scripture before us to-night, which implies sufficient direction and encouragement to every humble and believing heart.

Now, while this was singing in the field, and the shepherds were following the instructions of the angels, what was the spirit prevailing at Jerusalem, and the traffic carried on there?—The busy crowds were regarding only their own affairs —how far the Roman power would be prejudicial to them in the end—the best means to guard against it—and how to erect themselves into a people of consequence as they had once been: the Scribes and Pharisees were studying how their notions were to be supported: the men of business were rising early, sitting up late, and thinking that the one thing needful was gain: the men of pleasure and delicacy were saying, "Let the common people expect the Messiah: let us retire to our enjoyments."

Was this the case with Jerusalem? Is it not a picture of London also?

In the mean time, the humble shepherds were receiving the visits of angels, and the Gospel was preached to the poor. They accepted the Gospel: it spread from one to another, and from nation to nation, till it covered the greatest part of the earth: it hath withstood all the power of hell:

it withstands it at this hour: yet London goes on just as it did!

What should each of us say to this, but, "O God deliver me from the spirit of a carnal and unbelieving worldly generation! O Lord, grant that I may escape thy wrath, and tread the narrow way that leads to eternal life!"

Is there in the congregation an humble Christian, who has still some doubts on his mind, whether the way is open to him, to enter as a candidate for eternal life?—I ask, "Has God made you willing to be saved? *Wilt thou be made whole?*" Or, are you saying, "O Lord, I desire to be good, but not now?" Do you desire to partake of the graces of God's Spirit? Do you desire the privileges of his house?—to be enabled to glorify God—to have an experimental taste of his peace, and to know that it is the greatest expression of God's good-will to man? Then hear the proclamation uttered as in your ears by the angels: and, if you cannot trust angels, hear what Christ says:—*Whoso cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* Take heed how you refuse him that speaketh from heaven, and who has positively declared, whosoever comes to him shall be saved. That you and I may put our trust in him that speaketh, may God grant, for his infinite mercy's sake!

SERMON XVIII.

LIVING WATER.

JOHN iv. 10.

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

IN condescension to our weakness, our Blessed Master has not only taught us by positive Precepts and Declarations, but he has suffered us to hear his CONVERSATIONS, and to be acquainted with his REMARKS; so that his conduct in life brings a kind of collateral evidence to the truths which he uttered.

We may gather from the statement of one particular case, how Christ would have spoken and acted in any other case of the kind.

For instance, our Lord came *to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto*

her, Give me to drink: for his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat. Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her—without taking notice at all of the schism that was between the Samaritans and the Jews, but coming at once to the grand point of instruction—*If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

1. Let us OPEN THE WORDS of this passage: and then

2. Make a FEW GENERAL REMARKS upon them.

I. We are to EXPLAIN this passage of Scripture.

"You are enquiring," as if our Lord should say, "how it is that I have overcome the prejudices of my countrymen, and am become willing to have some dealings with one that is a Samaritan; but this is, comparatively, an insignificant affair. There is a matter of infinite importance before you: and that is, that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son*—his principal and inestimable gift, the chief act of his mercy and

grace—*he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Now, *if thou hadst known this gift of God; if thou hadst known who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink;* if, instead of mistaking me for some poor Jew, weary with his travels, that might accidentally sit upon this well, and ask you for a little water, had you known that I am the only-begotten Son of God, that I am come into the world to redeem and ransom perishing sinners, that I have life and that I give it abundantly; if thou hadst known that I am the chief gift, the chief token of God's grace;—thou wouldest have asked of me: thou wouldest have come a petitioner to me."

As if he had said, "Such as know Christ and their own need, will consider him as the one thing needful; and that better part, which they not only choose, but which shall never be taken away from them. If they knew the gift of God, who at this time speaks, they would find that they were in the presence of one, in whom all the riches of God are treasured up, and through whom alone they are communicated to man: they would know, that I contain all that they can possibly want, that I am equal to all their necessities, and can supply all their wants out of my fulness: and they would know, also, that whosoever they may be, though they have lived in contempt of the gift, though their sins are as scarlet or as crimson, they are

encouraged to come as weary and heavy-laden sinners to me, and they should have rest."

If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked of me. Our Lord shews us, in this expression, why the generality of men make no application for the gift of God: for, as the Psalmist speaks in the ninth Psalm, *They, that know thy name, will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, has not forsaken them that seek thee. The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.*

"Now," our Lord seems to say, "if thou hadst known who is speaking; instead of, like the generality of men, cavilling about some trifling matter of dispute, about some schism between you and your neighbours, you would have seen the necessity of making immediate application to one who could heal all your maladies. If blind or lame, you would not be put away without a cure: if bid to hold your peace, you would cry so much the more, '*Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!* Help me now! Help me at this time! Thou mayest never pass this way again.' It is not enough that you know: you must put that knowledge in practice. *Thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee Living Water.*"

Living Water is a Hebraism for a spring; in contradistinction to water which is put into a cistern, and which may be drawn out: it is therefore called *living water*, as constantly rising and

flowing. Such springs, with healing virtues, are found in this country. The spring at Bath, for instance, has been rising beyond the records of history—for hundreds and thousands of years; and still rises a *living water* of health.

Our Lord points out, by this figure, the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit; as you may see in the seventh chapter of this Evangelist. *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.* We cannot mistake his meaning; for the Evangelist adds, *This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*

It is therefore as if our Lord had said to this woman, "If thou hadst known who it is that asked, thou wouldest have known that he is the Chief Gift of God; and that all other gifts are contained in this one. Thou wouldest have known that he gives his Spirit to them that ask him; which may be compared to a spring of water, springing up into everlasting life: and his gifts and grace are more necessary and refreshing to the thirsty soul, than water can be to the thirsty body. Thou wouldest have come to him, and he would have given thee living water."

II. Let us make upon the words thus opened a few general REMARKS.

Herein are set before us,

1. GOD'S GREATEST GIFT:
2. CHRIST'S BEST PROMISE:
3. THE WORLD'S WORST ERROR:
4. THE SINNER'S STRONGEST ENCOURAGEMENT.

1. Let us attend to GOD'S GREATEST GIFT—THE *gift*—the great—the greatest gift of God:—*If thou hadst known* THE *gift.*

There is an infinite variety in the gifts of God:—in creation, for instance. It is well for us to remark and admire these: but, while we are discoursing on these gifts, we must remember that these are not THE gift. For, if a man limit his time and his thoughts to the consideration of the beauties of creation, and attend not to THE gift, the chief gift of God, it is like presenting to a wretched criminal, on his way to execution, a nosegay or a garland of flowers—something to amuse him—and, at the same time, withholding that knowledge which alone could save him. But, *God so loved the world:*—he so *loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* And, as St. Paul speaks, (Rom. viii. 32) *He, that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things?*

Christ, the great Prophet and Priest of his

Church, was continually turning his hearers to this one object. He compares it to *a treasure hid in a field*—to *a pearl of great price*—to *the bread that cometh down from heaven*—and, here, to *living water*, having water before him, and asking for some to drink; and hearing the woman begin to turn the conversation to some insignificant matter—to her disputes with her neighbours; he comes at once to the point, takes up the subject before him, and turns it into a text:—

"There IS water; water indeed,—water of life: and *whosoever drinketh of it shall never thirst*—he shall not faint nor perish for ever: it shall cure him from thirsting for trifles: he shall have evidence that this is sufficient for him, in time and in eternity."

It is worthy our observation, how our Lord purposely avoids controversy about circumstantials in religion. The Samaritan or Jewish prejudice hinted at by the woman, he does not so much as notice: not a word on the subject. "Some differences," it has been well said, "are best healed by being slighted:" it is giving them too much weight, and paying them too much respect, to waste our time or thoughts upon them.

But, while some differences are best healed by being slighted, still, in order to shew a perishing creature the only hope that God sets before him, we must imitate our Lord in bringing forth

to light the ignorance of men concerning this point, and the indispensable necessity that there is for their knowing it, or perishing in eternity.

I would ask every man before me, Have you seen and felt this great act of God's grace and mercy, in sending his Son Christ Jesus to save perishing creatures, who are daily dropping into eternity, and it may be into hell? Do you see what an amazing discovery of mercy it is, that you are called to take hold of eternal life; and that you may thus advance into eternity, with a sure and certain hope of escaping all the miseries that sin has brought into the world? Christianity has its peculiarities, and it is not to be trifled with. There is one grand important thing set before us in it, which was pointed at by Prophets, preached by Christ, and testified by Apostles—that God has given but one name under heaven by which man may be saved.

2. Let us consider CHRIST'S BEST PROMISE—*Living Water*.

Not as the world giveth, he says, *give I unto you*. As if he had said, "Were I to place before you the perishing baubles of time, it would be at best but treating you as children, and mocking your expectation with things which perish in the using: but I will give a promise of a Comforter that shall abide with you, even the Spirit of Truth: he shall guide you into all truth. My best promise is this: the great promise which I make

unto the Church is this: that if they come and ask of me, I will give them *living water.*"

This is the same voice, which spake in the first chapter of Proverbs, "*How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?* How long will man act so like a fool and a madman, paying no regard to his state and condition? Hearken to me: *Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you:* I will give you *living water.*"

Thus our Lord encouraged his disciples: "You are grieving at my going away; but *I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away: for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but, if I depart, I will send him unto you.* And when he is come, *he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.—He will guide you into all truth.—I will not leave you comfortless:* I will send my Holy Spirit; I will give you *living water,* a spring of living water."

This is Christ's Best Promise.

Brethren, an humble and patient believer, taking God at his word and resting on Christ's promise, rises where all haughty reasoners and speculators must sink. Not that it is an irrational thing for spirit to operate on spirit; but an humble and patient believer comes as a little child to receive God's gift and promise, as suited to his

wants and necessities; and, in coming according to the command, and promise, and warrant of God, he finds that this *living water* does satisfy him; that the Spirit does convince him: that it does seal, and comfort, and sanctify him; that it gives him an earnest of the eternal inheritance; that it bears witness with his Spirit that he is a child of God; that it bears witness to the truth of the Gospel; that he has something to comfort his heart; that here is satisfaction, and no where else. "For," says he, "I find that what Christ has promised, I have received; and that it answers to his promise. I find that I am enabled not to thirst, as I formerly did: I do not now faint, as I used to do; I find that I do not now run about, crying, *Who will shew me any good?* I do not now stoop to every broken cistern for good. I find that this is the real, the substantial good."

I speak now to some, who have known and experienced in religion, that they should learn to imitate Christ. Christ exercised patience towards a stupid, carnal, wicked world; and managed with people as they could bear it. He ever kept the main object in view. While they endeavoured to draw him off with their dissensions, he directs them to the *living water*—the spring that should rise for ever! Let us imitate him herein. When we would converse with men on the most important subjects, when we would impress their minds

with some weighty truth, they will strive to turn the conversation to their disputings and contentions on some point, which, whether it be so or whether it be not so, it is not worth a straw to know.

3. Let us turn to what may be called THE WORLD'S WORST ERROR:—*If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked.*

The worst account that can be given of this world is, that, when Christ came into it it knew him not: when *he came unto his own, his own received him not.* And, every day, a thinking man must observe with pain, that, while the world boasts of its sciences, and its advances in illumination; yet talk to men of the Light of the World, speak of the Bread of Life,—tell them of the Treasure hid in the Field,—or of this Living Water, which cures man, relieves him when fainting, and prevents him from fainting for ever—you bring *strange things to their ears!*—" What notions have you taken up in your mind? Who has been misleading you?"—Misleading me!—Is it then misleading a man, when he thinks that he has a soul, to teach him what will become of it? Is it irrational to think of the gift of God? Is it strange that a dying man, when he finds that he must die and after death stand before God in judgment, is it strange that he should make provision against that day? It needs no words to shew that such objectors must be infatuated to the

last degree, or their common sense would pronounce these to be the most important questions that can be asked, the most important considerations that can possibly come before the mind.

If a man had to pass through a desert, and there were but one spring of water in that desert, and if he and his whole family must perish should he pass that spring, would he travel on without consideration? Would he say, that he hoped all would be very well?—he dare say he should do as well as others?—there was no great need of hunting after this spring? Every one would say, "He is mad." Yet there is no comparison between him, and the man who would pass by this Well of Life! Peace, Pardon, Eternal Life, all must come from *Living Water;* and yet men talk of it, as if it were of no value!

Should you meet a multitude of diseased people, hastening, in every possible method of travelling, to a spring in some part of this kingdom of reputed virtue in the complaints under which they laboured; and should you express surprise at this sight; would not each justly reply, "Is it not reasonable, that, if I cannot travel in such equipage as I would wish, I should go as I can? that, if I cannot ride, I should walk, in order to be healed?"—*They*, indeed will seek a water, which may or may not heal them: and *you* will applaud their exertions!—but, while Christ offers water that *shall spring up to everlasting life*, and

that shall invigorate enfeebled men, until they sit down in glory with him, and with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and with all who have ever drank of that water: you fall, perhaps, into the error of this woman, "*Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?* Can you offer us anything to be compared with such a possession?"

O ye, who have hitherto been such persons as I now describe, *Awake to righteousness, and sin not.* Know, that the greatest mistake you can make, or that Satan would introduce into your hearts, is, the neglect of this *gift of God,* this spring of *living water.*

If our Gospel be hid, says St. Paul, *it is hid to them that are lost.* And who are they?—*In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

My Dear Hearers, whenever it pleases God to open a man's eyes, and to shew him his character and condition, he sees this to be a common error, that men forsake the living waters and try *to hew to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns which can hold no water.* And, whenever there comes any thing worthy to be called relief in the case of man: bringing him to himself, as the prodigal was said to be; and leading him in the way to eternal life;

it is by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

4. The last thing to be considered is, THE SINNER'S STRONGEST ENCOURAGEMENT:—*If thou hadst known, thou wouldest have asked,* and *he would have given.*

This, Brethren, is our strongest encouragement—not that the creation about us is glorious in beauty, and rich in its bountiful produce—not merely that we have lived under a beneficent Providence, who has guarded our lives, fed and clothed us, and provided for us comfortable habitations; these gifts of God we should ever remember, and for these we should ever be thankful: but we should remember, too, that the world, in its best state, is but a barren wilderness. *My soul thirsteth for thee, O God,* says the Psalmist, *in a dry and barren land where no water is!* We should remember that *man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity:* whatever he possesses is departing, and he himself must soon depart too. Here, therefore, lies our encouragement: here is the one point of comfort: here is the rest of the heart of man:—not that creation may astonish us with its grandeur, or pour out its bounty into our lap—not, that, while here creeping on our earth, there is a Providence that shall keep us to the end of our lives:—but here lies our hope—that, in the wilderness, there is a spring of *living water* to be found! *living water,* in a dying world! There is our encouragement.

Take away this *living water*, and a contemplative man will ask, "What will you give me? Make me as rich as ever man was: heap on honours and pleasures: surround me with every gratification that can be extracted from the creature:—What then? I must go, and be no more seen! The higher you lift me, the lower I shall fall! There is no hope in these for an eternal world! My mind stretches out into eternity! *What must I do in the end thereof?* What is to comfort my guilty conscience, on a dying bed? When God shall say *Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee*, where are my barns then? and where shall I be?

In the midst, then, of ten thousand perplexities which must meet the mind of man, here is one grand and important truth, *If thou hadst known, thou wouldest have asked, and he would have given thee living water*, If a man will not ask, he rejects the counsel of God: he tramples on his gifts: and, in so doing, he incurs aggravated guilt, and must suffer aggravated condemnation. Yet, still, the truth remains:—there is a spring of water in a dying world.

A man may, indeed, raise questions on this subject. It may be with him, as it was with Hagar in the wilderness: water was at hand, though she and her child were perishing for thirst: they knew it not till the Angel of the Lord directed them; yet, still, it was at hand. Many

say, "I know not what to do. I know not what course to take in religion. I know not which is the truth. I know not how to determine in matters debated by men of character." Let them debate! Come you to the grand point. You are a perishing creature, and here is *Living Water. Ask, and ye shall have: seek and ye shall find. Take with you words:* "But I have not a heart to take words:"—notwithstanding *Take with you words, and say,* "*Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render thee the calves of our lips.* Enable me to see more of the excellence of this water: it is thine office to shew it me: Oh, shew it to ME."

Remember, at the same time, that there never was but one spring of *living water* for a sinner to drink at. *They drank,* says the Apostle, *of that spiritual Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ.* There never was but that one well of salvation, for satisfying the soul, and quenching the thirst of a needy and dying creature.

In conclusion, I would say, in the words of the Prophet, *Ho! every one, that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: and he, that hath no money, come:* for freely, *without money and without price,* has God promised it to them that ask it.

SERMON XIX.

THE NOBLEMAN OF CAPERNAUM.

JOHN iv. 46—50.

So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain Nobleman, whose Son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his Son; for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The Nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down, ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, go thy way, thy Son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

THIS is a short, but instructive history. It seems to need no explanation, being a simple narrative. I shall, therefore, at once endeavour to lead your minds to the Four following Observations:—

It points out to us,

1. The INDIGENCE OF HUMAN GREATNESS.
2. The EXERCISE OF FAITH.
3. The ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF JESUS, OUR GOD, TO SAVE.
4. The PROGRESS OF HIS TEACHING.

I. Let us remark the INDIGENCE OF HUMAN GREATNESS; or the poverty of the rich and noble.

This is a subject little thought of in the world, but the Bible was written to set our minds right, and lead us to understand every thing that concerns us. If you speak of a rich man, a nobleman, Indigence and Poverty are the last ideas connected with the words: yet the Scripture shews that they ought to be so associated.

A Nobleman here comes to Jesus of Nazareth—himself so poor that he *had not where to lay his head*—a nobleman comes to him in distress: he had a sick child; and what relief can riches bring in such a case? "They can employ physicians." And what can physicians do? *They* frequently leave the house, and say, "We can do nothing!"

Let the Rich recollect that their riches can do nothing for them in many of the common sorrows in life, in pain and in sickness: they can give no comfort to a dying man; much less can they give ease to a guilty conscience: they cannot purchase peace.

Nor let the Poor envy the rich man his possessions, when they consider how many things of vast importance there are, which his riches cannot procure for him; and Death stands waiting at his door, when he must leave every thing.

The Indigence of Greatness and the Poverty of Riches, are discovered in those wants which

belong to the rich and noble and great, and which can have no relief but from Him who is infinitely rich.

See a general at the head of his army, sweeping from the earth every thing that men call their own: the man seems to think every thing at his will:—the point of a sword, the bullet of a distant enemy, or the common infirmities of nature overtake him: he falls down, and expires!

A man goes to the East Indies—amasses a large fortune—comes home: but his wealth cannot purchase peace, for such men have been known to destroy themselves, because they could not bear to live.

Belshazzar calls his thousand lords to a festival, and determines that festivity shall rule the hour: but a handwriting appears on the wall—Belshazzar! Thou art a poor man! Thou hast no Saviour! Thou hast no Almighty Friend!

Hezekiah may suppose that he has many years to live: but Hezekiah! *Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live.* Oh, happy for him. He knew who dwelt between the cherubim; and he lifted up his eyes to him, and owned his dependence on him. He prayed for help; and found him, who is *a very present help in trouble.*

My Dear Hearers, if you are tempted to envy the rich, consider what is the most invaluable blessing which a rich man can have: and that is when he is taught of God his poverty; and when,

like Hezekiah, he knows to whom to lift his eyes, and how to do good to his neighbour, and to become a common blessing to society. *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed; that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see.* If ever thou art clothed, if ever truly rich, if ever thine eyes are truly open, it is when thou art coming to *the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

II. I shall notice, that this Nobleman was among those blessed persons, who feel their poverty. He acknowledged it: he came to Jesus, from Judea into Galilee. Here was the EXERCISE OF FAITH.

Not that great faith, indeed, of which you read in the Centurion: *Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.* But this man, according to his strength, came to the true Helper, and besought him that he would come down. *Jesus said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down, ere my child die.* Here was true faith. Faith made the report of the power, and grace, and friendship of Christ interesting to the man. He travelled fifteen miles—made his application,—spoke like a man, who, though distrusting our Lord's ability to save at a distance, yet

seems to say, "He is able to do it, if he come down; if he come before the child die." If his faith had been stronger, he would have said, "He can do it, without coming down;" But, still, being in earnest, and being certain that Christ was the only helper, he says, "Come and help me: thou canst help me."

It is a blessed sign, when a great man can bear reproof; when he is willing to be instructed. Our Lord said to him, *Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.* As if he had said, "I bring sufficient credentials, without working miracles. Look into the prophecies." The Nobleman, receives the reproof, but says, *Sir, come down.* There is something very natural in this. When our hearts are set on anything, people may counsel us: they may tell us our duty: but the heart is set on the point. Though our Lord is speaking to him of *signs and wonders*, he dwells on the same thing: "Sir! My child is dying! come down. You may instruct me, if you please: you may reprove me if you please: but sir! come down." It shews the man is tractable, a child of instruction, when he can bear reproof: especially if he is a great man; and does not plead his quality, but is content to be treated as a poor man.

This is the reproof: *Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.* As if he had said, "The truths which I preach, are proper objects for your dependance." Our Lord would teach us

not to prescribe for our physician, and that the greatest must bow before him. Let us learn by this history. Let enthusiasts go to dreams: let the Papist go to wonders and lying miracles: but let us trust the word of an eternal and unchangeable God.

Jesus said, Go thy way, thy son liveth.

III. We may remark, the ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF JESUS, OUR GOD, TO SAVE:—*Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way, thy son liveth.*

The Divinity of Christ is the foundation of his Priestly Office. The Godhead gave such a value to his sacrifice, that it became "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

It is the foundation also of his Regal Office. How could he relieve us in every possible case, if he were not the Almighty, All-sufficient God? How could he be in the midst of every two or three met together in his name, if he were not the Omnipresent God? A distressed father here comes to him:—he spake, and it was done. *Go thy way: thy son liveth.* He does not say, "Thy son shall live:" he does not say, "He shall recover:" but "Go home: you will find him well." And which is more—he not only removed sickness from the child, but doubt from the father: for he is not only the *author* but the *finisher* of faith. The father hears, believes, and departs

satisfied; depending on the truth of the speaker; comforting his heart; and feeling that there were here two miracles performed in one.

Oh, that you and I could learn from this history, that the Eternal God, who is the life of the creature, is here pointing out to dying creatures, like ourselves, that there is no rest, no hope for us in the world, but in *God manifest in the flesh!* So that, when he says to us, *Come unto me*, he adds, *and I will give you rest:*—rest for your bodies; rest for your souls; rest under your troubles; rest in temptation; rest in death; and rest in judgment. *Come unto me, and I will give you rest.*

Once more. When it pleases the Spirit of God to set his seal to the word of Christ, then it is that we begin to enter into that *rest which remains for the people of God.* Then we proceed, leaning on him, trusting and depending on his word. We do not SEE the Eternal Life, but it is enough for us to know that Christ has given us the promise. And thus, though, like Hannah, we go to the house of God in deep trouble, yet if we are able to embrace the word, we go away, as she did, *no more sad.*

IV. Remark the PROGRESS OF CHRIST'S TEACHING.

The nobleman went his way: and, as he was now going down, the fever left his son. He not

only *began to amend*; but *the fever left him*. When the father knew from his servants that the cure took place *at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth*, doubtless he would feel "This is another miracle! He has not only said, *Thy son liveth*, and enabled me to believe his word; but, at the very moment he spake the word, the work was done! Who is this? Nothing like this can be thought of any man or angel. This is he, who was promised to our forefathers! This is God in human nature! At the moment he spake, the work was done!" *And himself believed, and his whole house.*

Remark here the progress of Christ's teaching. A man in distress comes to Christ, and obtains help and faith to believe it: he returns home, and finds it done; and, in such a way, as shews the omniscient power of the doer: he relates this to his family, and asks, "Is not this the Messiah? Is not this *he, who should come?* Can the Messiah more fully authenticate his mission?" The servants mark the fact: they believe: the house is awakened, and becomes a house of believers. Here is the progress of Christ's teaching: for truth gains by fair examination. There are wonders and signs which impostors use, that will not bear examination: but, such is the truth and consistency of the religion of Jesus, that we invite men to examine for themselves. We lament that they will not do so. We lament that they will listen,

for instance, to such a trifling fool as Voltaire, or to such an incendiary as Hume; that they will go to any jesting scorner. Why will they do this? Because they fear to come to an enquiry.

But affliction makes us serious; and most of us, if we have ever been taught of God, have reason to thank him for the afflictions whereby he rendered us serious and thoughtful. He taught us by them the first step to wisdom. He leads us by them to himself, who is our only helper. A serious mind is a blessing. A serious, thinking, attentive, honest heart is an inestimable blessing. Such a man will soon perceive that there is more in Christianity, more in the worship and service and favour of God, than the jester ever thought of.

It is a serious thing to die: it is a serious thing to stand before God in judgment: it is a serious thing to have something then to rest on: and, when the awakened man comes to compare one part of the divine dealings with another, he sees that the same God who wrote the Book of Nature also wrote the Book of Revelation.

Thus it is that God advances his kingdom by truth. Satan has a thousand arts and falsities wherewith to advance his kingdom; but Christ carries on his by truth.

I call the men who are prosperous in this world, to examine and compare their temporal advantages with their spiritual, and to enquire whether they keep pace with each other. When you con-

sider how swiftly time flies and death approaches; surely your first prayer, when you open your eyes in the morning, should be, "Oh, put me not off with these trifles! Let me not wrap up my heart in these wretched objects of sense and time!" Brethren! are you afflicted?—It is a blessed school of wisdom. Endeavour to enter into God's design herein: then if you are brought under the heaviest affliction that ever man endured, you will praise him to eternity, that he laid it upon you. Pray to him to enable you to bear your burden, and to glorify him thereby; and then you will go away *no more sad.*

Parents! you and I have a great charge committed to us. And we have been wounded, again and again, by seeing how little we can impress the minds of our children, with those things with which we are impressed ourselves. Like the father before us we have sick children:—every one of them wounded and stung by the Old Serpent: his venom is working in them: you can bring them by faith in prayer, to Christ; and they never will be healed, till they come to him. Be you their examples: be you their teachers. Shew them the madness of sin; the dreadful end of those paths in which others are walking; the shortness of life; the certainty of death; and the blessedness of dying *in the Lord.* Recount to them your own mercies and comforts: afford them all the assistance in your power. Listen not to

the suggestions of despair. While life remains, there is hope. Many of us are witnesses, that, however far we may have been suffered to proceed, God has raised us up as monuments of his mercy.

Children!—I see that there are many of you here—consider, that, if you would be truly great and noble and eminent, you must be poor and wretched and miserable in your own eyes. Your deceitful hearts will tell you that you can do for yourselves what God alone can do for you: if you trust them, you are rebellious against God. This poor, gay, gaudy world, which God says is vanity, will try to ensnare you: if you are caught by it, remember that you are rebellious against God. Your parents, instead of making you wretched by bringing you to a house of prayer, wish to make you happy: they would not have you put off with vanity instead of happiness. May God enable you to beg your parents to lead you *in that way which is everlasting!* Wait on him, in prayer, till you give evidence that you belong to him! Say, with Jabez, *Oh, that thou wouldest bless me indeed! that thy hand might be with me! that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me.* Pray, "Oh, that thou wouldest train me up, like young Samuel, like Timothy; that I may be *visited with the favour which thou bearest to thy people,*"

SERMON XX.

THE POWER OF FAITH.

JOHN xi. 39, 40.

Jesus said, take ye away the Stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the Glory of God?

IN this history we have an instance of the power of our God and Saviour, as exhibited toward a distressed family, with which he was connected in the tender bonds of friendship. They had lost a valuable brother: they sent to Jesus, in the time of his sickness; but he went not. After the death of Lazarus, he took his disciples with him to the grave, that God might be glorified by the extraordinary miracle of calling forth to life his dead friend. Martha met him, and said unto him, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died—When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled:*—He *groaned* to see the ravages of sin; and to see man, whom

God had formed upright and perfect, laid as a mass of putrefaction in the tomb: and he *wept*, to shew that he had sympathy with us in our sorrows. *Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead,* listening to the reports of sense, starts her objections: *Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days:* he is in a state not fit for the eye to look on. Jesus silenced her objections: *Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?* as if he had said, "Martha! what did I say to thee? You forget who stands at the grave; and what he declared to you, when he told you, that, if you would trust him, you should see the glory and power of God shine forth in the resurrection of the dead."

This history will suggest to us some profitable remarks.

I. We may here see the special BENEFIT OF SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION.

There is an evil disposition in the heart, *to depart from the living God.* Creatures entice the heart, and call it away, as though they could do for us, what God alone can do. He therefore sends trials and afflictions, to stop us in our wanderings: then we vex, and fret, and think we *do well to be angry.*

We are apt to regard these trials as sent to strip us of our happiness; but God has other designs. When he sends an affliction, he would bring us

and himself nearer together: he would shew us that there must be a time to thrust away worldly cares; a time to approach and say to him, "Lord! I am weary of the world. *I would not live alway.* The *desire of my eyes is taken away at a stroke.* I see plainly that every earthly comfort must go. I must go myself: and *now, Lord, what wait I for? Truly my hope is even in thee!* In thee is comfort. *Vain is the help of man.*"

Martha was anxious about earthly things: Christ reproved her. One thing only is needful: here he again reproves her, and rouses her mind to feel the necessity of looking out for a better comforter than this world or its connections. How do facts, as well as the Word of God, speak the beggary of human nature! Whatever is dear to us, whatever is indeed valuable and excellent here, we must see to be dying and vanishing from us, in order to our enjoying it aright! Afflictions, when God sends them in mercy, appeal to conscience: "See how poor the world is! See how precious Jesus, *the Resurrection and the Life,* is!—Though your friends and comforts die, yet *he, that believeth in him, shall never die!* See how your comforts hang on a breath!" There is infinitely more wisdom acquired under one sanctified afflictive dispensation,—infinitely more wisdom in the house of mourning,—than can be acquired under a thousand lectures, though spoken by the tongues of men or angels, when we are at ease and quiet.

Are any of you, at this time, called to sit in the school of affliction? beg of God to give you to see his meaning in this dispensation, and to bestow on you the grand blessing designed therein.

II. Let us CONTRAST THE VANITY OF MAN WITH THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD.

These are strikingly contrasted in the text. While *all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness of man as the flower of the field;* and while *the grass withereth and the flower fadeth,* and we must soon be made deeply to feel that it is so: yet we may learn from the text the sufficiency of Christ to relieve, help, and comfort in all possible cases.

Jesus reproved Martha: *Said I not unto thee: that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?—Thy brother shall rise again: I know,* says she, *that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life: he, that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.* As if he had said, "The more you see of the misery and mortality of human nature, the more you should look to the Light of Life, the abundant grace of the Son of God, who has come down from heaven, and now speaks to your heart."

In order to this, it pleases God to lead things

to extremities, that his people may experience his power. Martha said, *Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days.* What can now be done? He seems to say, "Any thing can be done, if I undertake to do it. It is your extremity. You call this a critical, a hopeless case: I call it my opportunity,—the time to demonstrate the greatness of my power,—the time to lay a ground and a solid foundation for my servants' belief, *that, with God, nothing is impossible.*"

Brethren! we never reason so soundly, as when we reason thus:—"What has God said? What does he command us to do? On what does he tell me to place my expectation? And what is my duty at this time? Shall I tell *him*, that my friend is past recovery? Shall I tell *him*, that he has been four days dead? He says, *Take away the stone.* Let that suffice. I will take it away." The Centurion reasoned thus; and had more becoming sentiments than Martha, when he said, "*Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.* My servant is dying: I ask thee not to come under my roof: I ask thee but to speak the word: for *I am a man in authority, and have soldiers under me: and I say to one, Do this, and he doeth it: and to another, Do that and he doeth it.* Do thou thus speak the word; and, as thou sendest sickness, speak the word and thou shalt also send health."

They, who placed the most childlike confidence in the Son of God, were most commended of him. Let us, therefore, learn never to make objections to what God has taught us to do; for nothing can be brought to him without hope. Let us learn, that, in order to gain the blessing, the exercise of his power, we must honour him by depending on him: *Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?* Put honour, first, on him, by depending on his power: then we shall see its operation. Let us thus honour God. Let us meet him in prayer, seek his blessing, consult him in every difficulty, and never talk of possibilities and impossibilities, as if he could do this for us, but not that. It is our weakness thus to talk concerning him.

III. We may learn HOW WE ARE TO HONOUR CHRIST.

We are to do this, by resting on his word, *Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?* that is, "I taught thee where the matter turns; as to thy help, thy comfort, and my glory. I taught thee to leave it in my hand. If thou honourest the Promiser, thou shalt see the fulfilment of the Promise."

Christ refers to his own word. There is a necessity for this. There is a necessity for the truth being repeated continually. Every Christian has

need to be reminded, that he is called on to trust God's word. Is it not enough that he has spoken? Is there not firm ground to stand on in his word? What he says ought always to calm and satisfy us. Man is ever looking round: "What do my senses say? What does the ordinary course of things suggest? What are my expectations? What do my friends tell me?" But Christ turns away from these miserable Commentators: *Said I not unto thee?*

This Blessed Book, the Bible, to which we are so often referred, and which we are charged to search, repeats the reports of our God and Saviour to our hearts. It does not militate against this statement, that the expressions are general; for how were it possible for every man's particular necessities to have a particular revelation? If it is general, that may suffice. The enthusiast wants a dream: the thoughtless trifler throws open his Bible, and takes at random the first passage which he meets; and so deludes himself: but the serious reader of Scripture comes to it as to God's word; considers its general instructions, encouragements, and assurances; then considers how far these are applicable to his own case.

Well were it, indeed, for us, if we could honour the Saviour as we would honour a valuable friend. If a great man offer us his friendship, we say, "Such a nobleman gives his word to assist me when in distress; and, when a particular case

arises, I shall take it to him." There is not a person in the congregation, who would not rejoice and comfort himself in such a friend. How much more should we do this when God has sent us his word, and has set his seal to it, *that, by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us!*

In the history before us, God speaks generally to the heart. Christ does not say, in this case, "*I* will remove the stone:" for *they* could do that: "But, as to raising thy brother, that you cannot do, because it is the work of God; that *I* will do."

Be on your guard, Brethren, against all enthusiastic personal revelations. It is our duty to take this word; to rest on its general assurances; and, in particular cases, to take it to God, and pray that he would fulfil it in our particular instance. Were our Lord to return to earth, and to treat us with the particular friendship and familiarity with which he treated Lazarus, and we were to put a variety of anxious and curious questions to him, we may conclude that he would only reply, "Said I not enough to thee on the subject? It was a full and satisfactory promise that I made thee;—*Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.*"

Let us learn, then, to think honourably of God and of his word.

IV. We remark, once more, that, while THE EXERCISE OF FAITH IS DIFFICULT, IT IS MOST HIGHLY HONOURED.

To *walk by faith, and not by sight*, is the most painful of all duties: yet it is that particular walk, and the exercise of that particular grace, on which God puts most distinguished honour. *Said I not, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?* As if he had said, "Martha! look not into the grave: think not of the state of Lazarus's body: believe not your senses in this case, contrary to my report. Credit *me:* and, however difficult it may be to believe that a putrid carcase shall be raised to perform all the functions of life; yet, if you can trust me, you shall see the fact."

Here Nature stands stripped of its pride. The language of the opposers of Scripture rests upon this principle: "Do not my eyes, do not my ears tell me this and that? Am not I to rest on the reason which God has given me?" Remember, that, when God speaks, we must take his word for a certainty; his promise, for a reality. Here nature stands stripped: but it is that it may be clothed with a better garment. Nature is apt to vex and fret: its language is like Naaman's: it stands up in its pride, and says, "*Are not Arbana and Pharpar better than all the waters of Israel?* And why dip seven times? Why more than once? *And Naaman went away in a rage.*" But a truly

humble man would have said, "What are Arbana and Pharpar to me, who am charged to wash in Jordan? Such would have been the sentiments of Martha, had she remembered who spoke: "What are apparent impossibilities here? The Lord God Almighty stands before me, clothed in human nature, and says, 'Martha! Trust me, and you shall see my power.'"

In this way, we must use God's word. Does he say, *Call upon me in the day of trouble?*—it is not for us, then, in seeming impossibilities, to limit the power of the Holy One of Israel: to say *He has provided bread, but can he give flesh also?* as the murmuring Jews did. The true posture, Brethren, of dependent and needy creatures, like us, is to relinquish the reasonings of sense, to believe God's Word, and to wait for its fulfilment.

When Abraham, *the father of the faithful*, took Isaac his son, and offered him up, in intention, and therefore actually in the sight of God, it is said, in the XIth chapter to the Hebrews, that he believed *God was able to raise him up even from the dead.* As though he had said, "Surely, he, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed, is not now to be cut off! God will fulfil his word, and raise him from the dead."

To-morrow, about this time, said Elisha, (2 Kings vii.) *shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria:* that is, there shall be great

abundance, instead of the present famine. But, *a lord, on whose hand the king leaned*, asked, with scorn, *If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?—Behold*, said the prophet, *thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.*

I mention not these things to shew the ignorance, the weakness, and the depravity of this or that man; but the blindness, the weakness, and depravity which degrade your heart and mine. I know what it is to offend herein, and to say, "This is impossible! How shall I escape this difficulty?" But he, who speaks thus, forgets the power and the faithfulness of God. The path of duty is before us: we must *sow our seed in the morning, and in the evening withhold not our hand:* we must sow the seed of spiritual instruction among our children: we must not say, "How can I give life to this dead child? how can I turn this prodigal from the error of his ways? We must do our duty to our children, servants and connections, and wait for *the day-spring from on high* to shine on the work, and raise up the seed. We must say, "What I cannot do, God can. All things are possible with him."

The very trials, then, which we meet with in life, are in the hand of God, our spiritual instructors.

Have you, like Martha, waited through days of darkness and weeks of perplexity? Have you

suffered in your spirit; and been ready to despair, through a powerful temptation and an unbelieving heart?—May not the Lord of Life say to you, as he did to Martha, "*Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe,* and go forward in the path of duty, under my direction, resting on the truth and honour of my character, *thou shouldest see the glory of God,* notwithstanding the darkness and crookedness of the way? Ask yourselves what God has said; what assurance he has given you; what assurance he has given to every one to whom he has given his word. Said he not to thee something on every point interesting to thee? I challenge you to say that he has not. There is not a man on earth, to whom he has not given counsel, and direction, and consolation in his Word. Did you ever repent, in time past, your putting honour on this Word? Are not many of us witnesses, that, in the most necessitous cases, we have had cause to say, "He has heard me in the day of trouble, when I called upon him at his command; and he delivered me out of all my distresses!"

Oh, that men who are dying out of this world, who must soon come into the state in which Lazarus was, of each of whom it will soon be said, *He has been dead these four days*—Oh, that you and I could now listen to the Lord of Life in what he here says! For he speaks not of Lazarus alone; but he speaks to us all: *Thy brother shall*

rise again. I know, says Martha, *that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.—I*, said he, *am the resurrection and the life. He, that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.*

Behold our remedy for the misery of the grave! Though it be dark, a beam of light is let into it. Here is comfort for a dying bed: not the lying comfort of the Atheist, the Moralist, or the Philosopher, who tells us, "It is the debt of nature!" What consolation does that thought yield? But here is the Prince of Life, saying, "Though thou art dying, though there is a bottomless pit infinitely more dreadful than the grave, yet come ye unto me, *Why will ye die?*"

Who, then, is he that thinks religion a melancholy thing? It is the only friend that can help us in life or death. God grant that we may adopt its principles, and walk in its practices; and he, that believes and trusts it, shall see the glory of God.

SERMON XXI.

FELIX TREMBLING.

ACTS xxiv. 24, 25.

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And, as he reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled: and answered, go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

WE may lay it down as a maxim, that, soon or late, pride and power will sink before truth and righteousness.

Let us

1. STATE THE CASE of the text.

2. Draw some general INFERENCES from the subject.

I. Let us attend to the CIRCUMSTANCES here recorded.

St. Paul had been sent from the Jews to the Roman Government. He stands before Felix.

Who was this Felix? he had certainly freed the country from some abuses; but historians agree that he was a wicked, cruel, and covetous

man: he was oppressive and unjust, with respect to the Jews: he had procured the murder of Jonathan, the High Priest; and he lived in adultery with this Drusilla. Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa: she had been brought up in the Jewish religion: she was a celebrated beauty; and Felix had persuaded her to forsake her husband Azizus, and to marry himself who was a pagan.

Now the text informs us, that, *after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ:* that is, he heard Paul state his views of Christianity; and he heard him make an application of the discourse.

He heard him *reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come:* he argued from the facts which he had stated in a rational way, and he made a powerful address to the consciences of his hearers.

He reasoned with them on *righteousness* and justice. He shewed that there was a standard, which God himself had set up, quite contrary to the corrupt maxims of the world: he shewed the sanctions of these truths, in opposition to those who say, *Tush! thou God will not regard it.* And he shewed also the righteousness that God had set forth in the cross of Jesus Christ; for he reasoned with them concerning *the faith in Christ:* as if he had said, "Justice is here set forth in the

strictest and most effectual manner: *righteousness and peace kiss each other.*"

And he reasoned not only concerning righteousness and justice, but concerning *temperance* or chastity. He shewed, before an adulterer, how wretched a mistake a fallen spirit makes, that, while he is hastening to eternity, he commits himself to the pleasures of a brute. He shewed them how incapable such a man must be, as to anything like friendship with God; for *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

He reasoned also concerning *judgment to come.* No doubt he shewed them, that a judgment to come is to be expected from the unequal distribution of things in this world: and argued on the certainty of it, from the declarations of Scripture: *Enoch, who prophesied the seventh from Adam, said, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints:* Daniel had pointed out the terrors of the Great Day: Christ had described the process of the Last Judgment. He shewed, doubtless, that nothing was more plain than these truths, and yet nothing more important.

But, as he reasoned on these subjects, *Felix trembled:* for Felix was not ignorant of these things: he felt how justly the Apostle spake—how reasonably, and simply—how sincerely, and faithfully. If a man will hear and take the word of God for his standard, he must fear and tremble when he hears what God says of man dying an unpardoned and impenitent sinner.

But what is the conduct of Felix? *Go thy way for this time*, says he: *when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.—Go thy way.*

The truth, when believed and felt, will always make a man dislike either himself or the minister who sets it forth. Ahab could not bear the preacher of truth: *There is one prophet more*, says he: *but I hate him; for he does not speak good concerning me, but evil:* because there was nothing good to be said of him; but Ahab hated the preacher.

Go thy way for this time: "Let me put off the evil day a little longer: I would fain shake off my conviction."—Is not this the old trade of sinners? Is it not evident how much men wish to put away these considerations? They cannot deny the truth; and yet—*Go thy way for this time: when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee.*

Here is an old device of Satan:—"You will not die just yet: have a little longer pleasure: go on in thy ways of vice: think of it at some future season." It is even said of St. Austin, that part of his prayer used to be, "O Lord, make me a good man, but not yet!" *Go thy way for this time: when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee.*

II. The subject, thus opened, brings before us some general CONSIDERATIONS.

1. You see, my Dear Hearers, from this passage

of Scripture History, what is THE DUTY OF A MINISTER.

St. Paul had given an account of Christianity; but he neither considers the greatness of the persons before him, nor does he bend to their taste and notions, nor does he consider his own safety. He preaches justice, to an oppressor: he preaches chastity, to an adulteress: he preaches judgment to come, to a judge on the judgment-seat, while he himself is the prisoner. Truth will pay no undue respect to persons. We may bow to truth; but truth will not bow to us. Truth will aim at the conscience; and St. Paul, the Minister of Truth, will prefer the salvation of a single soul to his own safety; and he will labour, even when there is little prospect of success.

But, let me ask: Must a Minister be less faithful now? Are men now less dead in trespasses and sins? Are they less deceived by Satan? Have they a more just view of the state in which they stand? Are their souls less valuable? —Recollect, if the truth at any time appear but little grateful to your feelings, let whatever be the consequence, whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, I am bound to declare it.

You see, therefore, from this history, the Duty of a Minister.

2. Let us consider THE FORCE OF TRUTH.

The more plainly truth is set forth, the more keenly will it be felt: the more important it is,

the more affecting it must be: the more consistently delivered by an honest man, who is himself under its power and influence, it will be the more penetrating.

Drusilla, being a Jewess, might possibly shroud herself under her Jewish privileges; and might take up the sentiment of those who cried, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we!* —In the course of my ministry, I have found none so impenetrable to truth, as those who shroud themselves under the privileges of their Church—a set of formalists, that say, "Do not we belong to the True Church?"—But what is the state of your hearts? Have you the fear of God in your hearts, or are you resting on your outward privileges?

Felix, indeed, could not thus shelter himself from conviction. It is no wonder, therefore, when he heard the truth so plainly, that he trembled, though he did not turn to God; for, like Agrippa, he knew something more than Drusilla. Greatness cannot support us against truth. Belshazzar may revel in the midst of his lords and concubines; yet if God write upon the wall, his loins will tremble, his greatness will not save him. Plain truth was here proposed to Felix: a faithful preacher set it forth: irresistible conviction took place: an arrow entered his conscience: Felix trembled, and said, *Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee.*

Brethren! learn to make truth your friend; for greatness will not support you against it. If Felix trembled before Paul, who stood in chains as his prisoner; what will Felix feel, when he comes to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? Who would not then wish to be the prisoner Paul, instead of the governor Felix? It was a just sentiment of Colonel Gardiner when he said, "I fear God, and have none else to fear."

3. Let us consider also, from this passage, THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

What miserable evasions are here, when the truth is so plainly set before him! Nay, worse than evasions: for *he hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him! wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him:* but because the Apostle would not use money for this purpose, if he had had it, *Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.* Such, you see, is the deceitfulness of sin, that many will trifle with God and with their convictions: they will regard their self-interest and the good-will of men, as Felix did, more than the truth and the fear of God.

You may behold in these two men, a kind of abstract of the whole world.

Here is a great man,—a governor; who seems to say, "How shall I manage things at this time? How shall I extract a little money from this prisoner?" Mean and contemptible spirit!

And here stands a man in chains before him; who seems to see nothing but the things of eternity, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, for whom he has suffered the loss of all things, and determines to suffer the loss of even life itself, that he may win the prize of his high calling!

These are not new characters. In the thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel, God says to his prophet, *Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song, of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not—their heart goeth after their covetousness.* And, for St. Paul, he was only one of the same stamp, and stock, and cast that Moses had long before exhibited: *he counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.*

You see, then, whence it is, that the Gospel comes to be so slighted: it is this deceitfulness of sin: it is this love of present things: it is this apostasy from God. *The God of this world,* says the Apostle, *has blinded the eyes of them that believe not:* the love of the world has overwhelmed them: the fear of man keeps them prisoners: and Satan forwards the delusion: You cannot deny the truth," as if he had said: "You cannot suspect the truth of what Paul says; but you can put off the matter: you can hear him at a more convenient season: you can go on enjoying yourself; and, when your conscience is more hardened, you can hear him again."

Ye, who talk of a more convenient season—ye, who think of putting off religion to a death-bed—this is one of the grand devices of Satan to keep you as he would wish you to be. *The strong man armed keepeth his goods in peace*, while he can; but it is my duty to come, in the name of the *stronger than he*, and shew you the necessity of this armour being spoiled, before you can enter into the happiness prepared for the children of God.

4. I shall only add, that we are here taught

THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF DIVINE GRACE.

Even St. Paul may preach, and his character cannot be suspected: the truth he preaches cannot be denied: he reasons plainly and convincingly: Felix can only reply, with trembling, "I will hear thee again:"—now the necessity of divine grace appears from this, that, till the man is under its influence, he will continue to say, *When I have a convenient season, I will send for thee.* Without the grace of God, and the work of the Holy Ghost, the utmost that a preacher can hope to do, is, to rouse the sinner, as Paul did Felix—to make him tremble to think of what is before him, as Felix trembled; and a time may, perhaps, come, when he will say, as Agrippa did, "*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*" Abraham did not reply to the rich man, that, if one arose from the dead, his brethren would not tremble: but he said they would not believe,

or be persuaded: they would not be persuaded to tread in the narrow path, and lay hold on eternal life.

You see, then, the nature and necessity of divine grace. Without this, man's religion would be merely external: it would be but *the form of godliness, without the power*. You see its efficacy, also: for this man,—a man of consequence and looked up to,—was so determined on the wrong side, that he persecuted to death every Christian on whom he could lay his hands: but, when divine grace opens his heart, he stands in chains, and, at the peril of his own life, preaches the Gospel to Drusilla the adulteress, and Felix the adulterer; and, having fought manfully, surrendered himself to all consequences, *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*: As if St. Paul had said, "I expected this issue. If God does not impress this truth on the heart of the adulterer, he will hate me the more: he will probably put me to death: but I must speak the truth, and then I can say, *I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith*; and, whatever Felix may do, *henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness; which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*."

SERMON XXII.

THE FASHION OF THE WORLD.

1 Cor. vii. 31.

For the fashion of this world passeth away.

THE Apostle had been discussing one of the Cases of Conscience, presented to him by the Corinthian Church. He brings it, at length, to a general reflection on the subject:—*This I say, Brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*

I shall consider the general proposition in the text, without any particular reference to the specific case to which it may be applied, whether marriage, or politics, or commerce. It is a general truth of vast importance. *The fashion of this world passeth away.*

I shall

1. Illustrate the sense of the passage:

2. Draw some PRACTICAL INFERENCES from the position.

I. I have to state and illustrate the SENSE.

Grotius says on this passage, that the expression has an allusion to a theatre, where the *Scheme*, as the word means literally which we translate *Fashion*, the Scheme, the Image, the Form, the Representation, is wholly changed.

Another writer will read it, *The Scene of this world passeth away*. The actors in a drama sustain various characters: the scenes are continually changing: some actors stand forward as the heroes of the drama; and some lurk behind the scenes, as obscure characters; and all these masked, in the ancient theatres: at length the curtain drops, and the scenes are over. This presents to us a very striking picture of life;—a continually changing scene, that passeth away.

But I prefer the manner in which Archbishop Leighton considers the passage.—He treats it as if it were thus written: *The pageant of this world passeth away:* it is a mere procession; at best, but a pageant. As a pageant, or show, in the street, soon gets far off, and is quickly out of sight, thus is it with respect to the present world. For, says he, what is become "of all the marriage solemnities of kings and princes of former ages, which they were so taken up with in their time? When we read of them described in history, they

are as a night-dream, or as a day-fancy, which passeth through the mind, and vanisheth!"

Who has not looked into history, and felt this strike him, as one of the first facts: "It is all gone by! a mere pageant!" An old man has seen most of the pageants of his time pass by: he remembers the mighty actors of his youth; but they are gone! those, who made the most splendid appearance in the procession, are passed by long ago: he is ready to say, "All is show! All is pageant! It is but the shifting of a scene."

And what is this more than what the Scripture taught us before? In the XXXIXth Psalm, we find David saying, *Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.* If he makes a show, it is a vain show. If he is disquieted, agitated exceedingly in his schemes and projects, it is in vain. If he heaps up riches, and is ready to say, "At least there is something in this! Property is the grand thing in the world!" —he heaps up riches, and knoweth not who shall come immediately and take them away! *And now, Lord,* says he, *what wait I for?* Man walketh in such a vain show, the pageant of this world so passeth away, that I must have something greater and better, more solid, more substantial.

Thus St. John expresses it:—*The world passeth away, and the lust thereof.* It matters not of what

importance man is found to be of in his time; nor how much he may build, or plant, or boast, or perform: he has but his stated time. The summons comes: he must go. Another actor takes his place: another steps into the procession. He also soon goes, and gives place to another: so that there scarcely seems anything on earth more evident than the truth in the text—that *the pageant of this world passeth by.*

II. Having thus considered the Sense of the passage, let us proceed, as I proposed, to draw some practical INFERENCES from the position.

1. If, as we have seen, the pageant of this world passes by, we may collect HOW LITTLE WORLDLINGS KNOW OF THAT WORLD OF WHICH THEY PROFESS TO KNOW SO MUCH!

"I know the world," says one of them: "nobody can tell me anything about this world. I have had long experience. I have seen into the matter. I am not to be deceived like young people, or to be imposed upon by show. I have remarked by long experience, that it is a farce which is acted on the stage of life" . . . . You know the world?—You know nothing of the world to purpose! For what does the Miser know of this world, who is *heaping up riches, while he cannot tell who shall gather them?*—What does the Politician know of this world, whose politics are

founded entirely upon some measure, that is but for a moment? What does the Ambitious Man know of this world, who is building on a wave? What does the Pleasure-Taker know of this world, who grasps it as his portion, while it is vanishing away?

If I see a child building on the sand; taking his advantage, while the tide is gone down, and there is some dry sand for him to build his house on and amuse himself, thinking it will stand—I say, "It is a child! he does not consider that the tide is coming in, and will wash it all away!" If I see another child overjoyed; its little heart filled with the consideration that it is going to see a procession, like that which passed in this week*; quite satisfied to think it shall see a sight, nor looking beyond this—I say, "It is a child! This is natural!" It is nothing to that child whether it is a coronation or a funeral: the child makes no moral reflections on the subject. I wish this could be said only of children. I wish it could be said of no person of mature growth, That they will see such a procession, and make no moral reflection on it.

Brethren, the men of this world actually know but little of the world, because they take not the Bible for their instructor! The little that man can do for man enters not into their thoughts! A nation may unite in determining to honour an extraordinary character, and one justly lamented—yet how little can man do for man!—he can dress

* Alluding to the Public Funeral of Lord Nelson. J. P.

out his funeral! he can pronounce a pompous oration! he can rear a statue! How feeble, how evanescent, yet how imposing the scene! But the scene shifts, and patron and client are both gone! No doubt, in their day, a vast sensation was raised in the respective nations of such men as Pharaoh and Sennacherib—"What will posterity say of this?"—What?—Posterity has its own pageants to admire! In the days of Alexander, and Cæsar, and Tamerlane, a vast sensation was doubtless raised with respect to the pageant that was then passing; and *great swelling words of vanity* were heard concerning the immense affair then in hand! If anything could make angels weep, it must surely be the beholding of such effects on men from the passing pageant of this world.

Let us consider, therefore, Brethren, how little real knowledge the worldling has of the world. He builds all his hope on this unstable foundation. He is disquieted in vain.

I speak to young people. Shall such men be your guide? Shall such men form your sentiments? Will you study to be in reputation with such men; and thus build, like them, on the sand? Young man! read thy Bible: hear God: form your sentiments, so as that they will bear examining ten thousand ages hence: then you will be truly wise: but, till then, you will not, while living in this world, judge rightly concerning it; for it is but as a procession, or a pageant, that passes by.

2. If, then, the scene is continually changing, if

there is nothing here like rest for the foot of man, then I would remark, HOW GRACIOUS IS IT IN GOD, TO MEET THE WANTS OF A GUILTY, DYING CREATURE, LIKE MAN, IN SUCH A WORLD AS THIS!

It is appointed unto men once to die: they must all vanish after the procession is over, as to the eye of their fellow-creatures: but, *after that, the judgment!* Small and great must stand before the bar of God. Our Lord shews us, in St. Luke's Gospel, a striking picture of that state. The rich man acted a conspicuous part in the passing pageant, and the poor man at his gate sustained a very low one; but, in condescension to our weakness, it pleased our Lord to take us behind the scenes, and to shew us what was going on after the pageant was passed. And why did he shew us the rich man in hell, lifting up his eyes in torments, and Lazarus taken to Abraham's bosom?—why? to terrify the mind of man?—rather, let me say, to instruct his mind; to give us a right notion of character; to shew us, that we are to aim, not at sustaining a high part in the procession, but rightly sustaining the part assigned us.

The Son of God himself came down, and passed in the procession: and what did he preach as he passed?—did he flatter men; and speak smooth things to please them, meeting their tastes and prejudices? No! he wept over Jerusalem: he exposed the rich fool, that gloried in his barns and in his goods: he commended the woman that

sat at his feet, and heard his word, as seeking the one thing needful, and choosing the better part that should never be taken from her. When his disciples came to him, to shew him the stones and great buildings of the temple, was he struck with the scene? "Alas!" says he, teaching them as a father would his children, "your eyes have caught the spectacle: this is a picture that strikes you: but I tell you, that there is not a stone here that shall be left upon another. I see it as dust. I see the end of the pageant: it is passing away! The temple itself, which stands like a rock, the glory of the nation; and which even the conqueror shall strive to save, that it may be a trophy; even that shall be thrown down, and not one stone left upon another."

Who is then the wise man, while the earth is thus moving in the procession? "I will tell you," our Lord said, "whom he is like: he is like a man that builds his house upon a rock: the floods may come: the waves may beat: the wind may blow: but, standing upon this Rock of Ages, he *shall* stand: and, while others are passing away, *he, that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.*"

How gracious then is it to meet the wants of such an evanescent and guilty creature as man! —to shew him the way!—to plant the footsteps of the flock before him!—to prove to him what will not bear him up, and what will!

3. If the pageant of this world passeth by, and

this truth is demonstrated in experience as well as declared in Scripture, and yet men go on heedless of all consequences—HOW INFATUATED AND CRIMINAL IS THE WORLDLING!

How beguiled his mind, and how criminal his heart, if he will still act against all experience, and all the declarations which God hath made! When a ship has been wrecked, and no hope of escape remained, the sailors have sometimes been so infatuated, that, despising every consideration most suited to their danger, they have staved the liquor casks; determining, that when there was no hope on earth, they would at least die in the midst of sensual gratification! You are ready to exclaim, "Surely these are not rational creatures!" But I scruple not to say, that, if you continue to live a careless and ungodly life, while the pageant of this world is passing, and die in that state, such a wretched sailor is, in comparison, more rational than you are. If one were to remonstrate with such a stupid creature, it is probable he would say, "There is no help. I may live half an hour; and I am determined to get rid of what sensibility I have, in order not to perceive my death, and enjoy a present gratification. I have no hope! no prospect! I can do nothing!"—But no man, who has the Gospel preached in his ears, can say, however the world passeth away, and the procession is advancing, and with many of us almost gone, yet, no man can say, "There

is no help:" for he may yet flee for refuge to the hope set before him: he may yet place his foot on the rock: he may yet escape the shipwreck: deliverance is proclaimed whenever the Gospel is preached, and whenever the Holy Spirit brings any light to the heart of man.

The decree is gone forth: the procession must move on, whether men sleep or whether they awake: the pageant must pass: but, let it be remembered, that, if the men of London are like the men of Athens, who spent their time wholly in enquiring after some new thing; if the men of London are asking, even while the procession is passing, "Can you tell us any news? Can you inform us when there will be another sight? Do you hear of any fresh amusement that is promised?"—then I say, while men live and die in this manner—trifling with their time, when time will soon be no longer—let them call themselves anything but sober—anything but virtuous—anything but religious; for God calls them infatuated, and mere worshippers of their present idols!

4. Ministers may labour to stop men in this infatuated state, and to convince them of their strange levity of heart; but let us, lastly, remark HOW MERCIFUL IT IS IN GOD, TO WEAN AND DRIVE MEN FROM THE WORLD, as well as to draw them, by the invitations of the Gospel.

If our friend's house is on fire, we would bring him out kindly and carefully, if possible; but, if

our persuasions do not move him, we drag him out of danger! When God sent a message to Lot in Sodom, it is said, that *he lingered:* but *the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.* It is thus that God frequently acts with respect to us, when we appear to rest satisfied with the pageant as it passes. It is a merciful dispensation, however severe and mortifying to the feelings, that drives thee, Christian, to reflection; that rouses thee from thy sleep of death; that prevents thy perishing in thy dream; that preaches to thy heart; that says, *This is not your rest: it is polluted.*

My Dear Hearers, what practical feeling have you of these truths? Many of you, I doubt not, saw the affecting scene that passed through this city the other day. What instruction have you gained from it? If you say, "I know not any. I merely went to gratify my curiosity. It was enough for me, that it amused me for the time"—then I will tell you a more affecting scene than that which passed before your eyes: the levity and vacuity with which many thousands look upon such a sight, is a more affecting scene to the moral eye!—their minds are like a feather in the wind—no sentiment! no meaning! no wise reflection! no serious consideration! not so much as a

thought, "The pageant of this world is also passing by, and will soon be over!"

A scene, however approaches, which will oblige men to think:—A scene to which all other solemnities are as the dust in a balance. *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed!* And then, Brethren, you will not need the preacher, to demonstrate to you how the pageant of this world passeth by: you will not need the preacher, to shew you how little worldlings know of that world of which they boast to have so thorough a knowledge: neither will you then need to be taught, how gracious it was in God, to meet your wants as a guilty dying creature; nor how infatuated and criminal the worldling is, who sleeps on, under these warnings, in his carnal state: nor will you want any conviction, how merciful it is in God, to drive men, when they will not be drawn; and to bring them to their senses even by the most painful methods; as the Prodigal, when he could not estimate the blessings of his father's house and protection, must be sent to sit with the swine, and to famish, before he came to himself. Then shall it clearly appear, what part was allotted to us to perform; and that it was the right part, provided we performed it aright. We shall see, indeed, that the world passed away;

but we shall see some standing at the right-hand, who knew, while it passed, how to *work out their own salvation with fear and trembling*.

That you may have that wisdom, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, afforded to you, may God, of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

SERMON XXIII.

CHRISTIAN CONSOLATIONS ABOUNDING IN SUFFERING.

2 Cor. i. 5.

As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

"HOPE travels on," says the poet:—"Hope travels on, nor leaves us till we die:" and this is a distinguishing feature of Christianity.

A vast variety of things raise hope in a man: but they do but beguile him. They excite fond expectations: they promise great things: but they delude him: they leave him in extremity; and, what is worse, they leave him when it is too late to take hold of a better object. In extremity, they scorn his misery, and say, "We can do nothing."

But Hope travels on with the Christian; and when every thing else seems to say, "We can do no more for you," he lifts up his head with joy, knowing that his redemption draweth nigh.

Christianity, therefore, is the true remedy for trouble. There is no other remedy.

St. Paul bears his testimony to this, in the pas-

sage which we have read. It is thus introduced: —*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.* We can tell them our experience: we can prove to them that God, *the Father of Mercies*, is *the God of all Comfort*. And, he adds, if we are afflicted, it is, among other reasons, that we may be able, as exercised persons, to shew what God can do in affliction; *for, as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

The sufferings of Christ were, in some respects, peculiar. He was a public person: he undertook what none but himself could undertake: therefore there was a peculiarity in his sufferings. But the Apostle is here speaking of sufferings on account of Christ, which Christians pass through in conformity to him; that, as he was, they should be in the world.

I shall, therefore, shew,

1. WHAT ARE THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST,

OF WHICH CHRISTIANS, IN EVERY AGE, ARE PARTAKERS.

2. HOW CONSOLATIONS ARE MADE TO ABOUND BY CHRIST IN THOSE VERY SUFFERINGS. *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

I. We are to consider WHAT ARE THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, OF WHICH CHRISTIANS, IN EVERY AGE, ARE PARTAKERS.

1. A Christian will partake of the sufferings of Christ AS A WITNESS FOR THE TRUTH.

If, like Christ, he stands a witness for truth, he must needs have to oppose a host of falsehoods: and this host of falsehoods will put out all their force against him. Our Lord, *the faithful witness, witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate;* and, while he stood at the judgment-seat, he would not conceal the truth. Though he knew his confession would lead to his death, yet he told the true state of things, both with respect to himself and them before whom he witnessed his confession.

The Christian has before him a Book of Realities. "Here," says he, "I read God's own account of his dealings with men. Here I read his declaration of what Satan is doing, and what I am doing, and whither I am going. Here is his account of the end of the world, and of the only

method whereby a sinner can escape when standing before the judgment-seat of Christ. This will do me most important service! This is a Book of Realities, which lies before me: I am bound, therefore, to be a witness for truth. I know the truth. I have felt its power."

This man hears continually of falsehood riding triumphant, and reads false sentiments in almost every publication which he takes up, according to *the wisdom of this world that cometh to nought.* But he knows the falsehood of these things: he does not *think* them false, but he *knows* them to be so, because he has a standard whereby to measure every sentiment. Bringing these sentiments to his standard, and finding them false, "My duty," he says, "is brought into a narrow compass. It is plain as noon-day. *He, that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father: and him, that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father and his holy angels.* I must be a witness, therefore, for the truth. I dare not deny it. I dare not conceal it."

Can we conceive of a man going forth in this way, and not suffering for Christ? He is a bold witness for truth, and the sufferings of Christ will abound in him.

2. A Christian will partake of the sufferings of Christ and conformity to his death, in that he will be SCORNED AND MISREPRESENTED BY THE WORLD; for he brings to light and exposes the

falsehood, and iniquity, and false sentiments of the world.

A Christian has been justly compared to a man with perfect sight passing through a nation of blind men. A man with perfect sight passing through such a nation, could speak of very few things of which they could form any conception. "Did you ever hear," would one say to another, "did you ever hear of a rainbow?—or of colours?—or of light?—or of stars? The man is beside himself."

It is thus with the Christian, when speaking to the world of the things of God. The natural man cannot understand them, and treats him as one insane. Nay, it is said of Christ himself, that his kindred ran out to lay hold of him, thinking him beside himself. And of his Apostles it is said, that they were *spectacles to angels and to men. If*, says our Lord, *ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but, because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

It may be objected, that we are not to apply an expression, particularly addressed to disciples, to mankind at large. Let such objectors recollect, that one of these Apostles says, *All, that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.*

This partaking of the sufferings of Christ may be occasioned many thousand ways by mankind. If men have not their fire and faggots to bring

forth, to demonstrate the malignity of their hearts; yet, they have, as the Apostle expresses it, their *cruel mockings*, bitter reproaches, misrepresentations, and uncharitable conjectures. Did they not say of Christ himself, that he was a mover of sedition? These are but the various expressions of the malignity and enmity of the carnal heart against Christ and his servants.

3. Christ *suffered, being* TEMPTED. He had to combat, not only against the world, but against sin.

And, to the end of the world, his servants must be cautioned against their grand enemy. They must maintain a conflict to their latest breath. The Christian draws the sword, and throws away the scabbard. He has no expectation that it will ever be sheathed again in this world; for Satan, where he cannot destroy, will disturb.

Beside open assaults, the Christian will find this enemy spreading snares suited to his disposition and constitution. The *accuser of the brethren* is a veteran in mischief: he will provide some trial in our circumstances, and throw some stumbling-block in our way.

4. Being in the School of Christ, Christ's sufferings are made to abound in a Christian, when God exercises him by STRIPPING HIM OF SENSIBLE COMFORT AND STRENGTH; and calling him to walk by faith and patience, without anything external to lean upon—when he dries up creature springs.

I know what it is, in myself and others, for a man to be brought into such a situation, that his props, if I may so express it, are cut away—when his very friends become traitors to him, as Judas became to his master—when those, on whom he places most dependance, become strangers. He is then taught to walk in darkness, and yet to walk on: he is led through a wilderness, in which there is no way: he knows what it is to have his path walled up: and he is ready to say, *I shall one day perish.*

Our Blessed Master himself poured out strong cries and tears. It must have been no small trial to make *him* pour out strong cries and tears, who was from his birth *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.*

Hear, too, how the Apostle speaks, in the ninth verse: *We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.* And he speaks of being *pressed out of measure*—almost driven from hope: *insomuch that he despaired even of life!* And this is the language of Christ's school.

Brethren, whatever God has promised to his people, he has not promised to exempt them from affliction in this world. As one well remarks, it is the only blessing which God gives to his people without their asking for it: but, because he will bless by it, he sends it without their asking.

II. I am to shew HOW CONSOLATIONS BY CHRIST ARE MADE TO ABOUND, EVEN IN TRIBULATION.

1. A Christian's consolations are made to abound under his afflictions, as he is instructed IN RESPECT TO THE END OF HIS SUFFERINGS.

A man may bear much, when he can see the end. The Psalmist tells us, in the LXXIIId Psalm, that he was carried away by the *prosperity of the wicked. My feet*, he says, *were almost gone: my steps had well-nigh slipped.* But it pleased God to make his consolations abound, by shewing him the end. *When I thought to know this*, he says—when I thought to know this as a philosopher, and to reconcile it in my own wisdom—*it was too hard for me:* I could not understand it, *until I went into the sanctuary of God: then understood I the end.* But, he adds, *I am continually with thee*, though chastened and tried: *thou hast holden me by my right-hand*, as the parent does his child; *and thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory—As for me, it is a good thing for me to draw near to God.*

What may not be endured, when a man has evidence of the power and strength on which he leans? St. Paul cried earnestly under his affliction—the thorn that pierced him—the messenger of Satan. But our Lord said, "*My grace is sufficient for thee:* I will care for thee: commit the matter to me: you want support, and you shall

receive it." *Most gladly, therefore,* says the Apostle, *will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* I find, that, *as my tribulations abound, my consolations abound also.*

2. A Christian's consolations are made to abound by Christ, as, in treading this dreary and thorny path, HE HAS EVIDENCE THAT THIS IS THE WAY TO GLORY—not only that this is the way which leads to the end, but that he is in the way.

In the fourth chapter of this epistle, the Apostle says, *For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.* Though the outward man will soon sink and perish, yet God renews the inward man: *for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*—The consolation is infinitely greater than the momentary affliction—*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents, was the answer given to that enquiry, *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon.—Go thy way forth:—set up waymarks:*—notice what you meet with:—ask if that is not the way in which all walked who are gone

to heaven: ask for the way of them, that *came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.*

And are you in this way? Then you may say, every step of it, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* The sufferings of Christ will abound, more or less, all the way thou goest; but the consolation will abound also.

3. A Christian's consolations are made to abound in his tribulations, as HE HAS AN ASSURANCE OF PECULIAR SUPPORT IN TRYING SEASONS.

Of peculiar support, I say: for God will give strength for the day, and faith for the trial. Do you think of him as a hard master?—then you know him not. Will any of you send your servant on an arduous errand, and not consider his difficulties? Will you not grant support and countenance to your servant in his undertaking, in proportion to its difficulties? Oh, how do we dishonour God, in thinking he is more regardless of us, than we are of one another! "No! says our Lord, "*I am the vine: ye are the branches*: ye shall derive life and vigour from me; and, though the branch may be placed under a burning sun, which may seem to dry up all its nourishment, yet *I am the vine:* it cannot touch the vine: fear not: I know your troubles."

Therefore St. Paul says, *Though no man stood by me, yet the Lord was with me;* and, as my afflictions abounded, my consolations also abounded.

And this is the powerful argument of the text. "We are obliged," as if the Apostle had said, "to stand by this fact; that, whenever the sufferings of Christ abound, the consolations superabound." Herein God proves his sufficiency, and Christ his faithfulness. He saw the martyr Stephen dragged before an assembly of enraged men, who *gnashed upon him with their teeth:* and treated his arguments, and the truths which he spake, as if they were so many falsehoods and fables. He saw him dragged out to be dashed to pieces by their stones. But, "*Behold,*" says Stephen, looking up, "*I see the heavens opened:* I see Jesus, for whom I am suffering: that suffices! He is now looking at me, and saying, *Well done, good and faithful servant:* thou shalt have my light and consolation." Looking up, therefore, to his best and only friend, *Lord Jesus,* said he, *receive my spirit: lay not this sin to their charge, for they know not what they do!* How eminently did consolation here abound beyond affliction!

I shall speak a word to OBJECTORS.

Such may be ready to say, "If Christianity has such trials, I am ready to forego all and draw back. I thought all would be quietness and ease."

My Dear Hearers, it is to more than quietness and ease to which we invite you. We offer you consolation—comfort and joy through eternity. If

you shrink back, because Christianity will cost you something, it is most evident to every Christian that you have never counted the cost; nor what it will cost—*Not to be a Christian.*

You hear, perhaps, a rude and ignorant beggar, reasoning on the education of a king's son. Says the beggar, in his ignorance, "I choose to have my own will and my own way. I have no notion of the confinement of a school. I would rather lie upon my dunghill." What would you say?—You would say, "Wretched creature! he seems to have no sense of the miserable consequences of the ignorance and brutality of his present situation, and therefore scorns that on which the king sets so much value, and would pay for at a high rate to procure it for his son."

It is thus that beggarly minds speak of the troubles of the Christian, But, because he is a king's son, he shall have an education suited to his character and prospects.

SERMON XXIV.

GODLY AND WORLDLY SORROW.

2 Cor. vii. 10.

For Godly Sorrow worketh Repentance unto Salvation, not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

THE Wise Man tells us, that it *is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting*. The house of mirth is generally the house of extravagance, the house of absurdity and vanity: but the house of mourning has better lessons, better company, better consolation, and a better end: *for godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation*, and it is a thing *not to be repented of;* but, not the mirth only, but the sorrow of the world, worketh death.

The occasion of these words you will find in the fifth chapter of the First Epistle. Lately as Christianity had been introduced into the world, a gross scandal had crept into it: the Corinthians, instead of being humbled by it, were puffed up and careless. St. Paul wrote to them, and then they ran into another extreme. "*Though I made you sorry with a letter*," says the Apostle, "*I re-*

pent not, though I did repent. I rejoice not that this put you to pain: *I rejoice not that ye were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance: for godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death:* whatever pain, therefore, you have received from my letter, it has done you good: it has operated as a medicine: I do not rejoice at the pain; but I rejoice at its effects."

I shall,

1. EXPLAIN these words: and,
2. APPLY them.

I. I shall EXPLAIN these words.

1. Let us consider what is to be understood by GODLY SORROW.

A Christian has his peculiar sorrows and his peculiar joys: his *heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy.* If a tear fall from his eye, it falls with a consideration in his mind, like that of Job or Hezekiah, under correction. Others may think of nothing but chance, the ill-nature of man, the vexatious cross, and the circumstances that attended it: but this man's sorrow will be accompanied by a consideration, that God is to be acknowledged in his trouble.

"Not from the dust my joys or sorrows spring." He will mourn for his own sin: he will mourn for

the scandals of the church. Perhaps it is a personal affair which afflicts him; or, possibly, it is a family concern: but, still, he will see the hand of God in the affliction of persons, and in the distress of families; and he views it with a believing eye, and with a child-like spirit, and will be ready to say with Job, *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.*

When, therefore, God discovers to him that there is some evil, something that calls for the hand of the surgeon, this discovery will work repentance: *for godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of.*

And what will be the symptoms of this repentance? *Behold!* says the Apostle: mark the symptoms! No more careless levity! *Behold—What carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge!* These were the symptoms of a godly sorrow working repentance.

If we find Manasseh weeping, when *taken among the thorns, and cast into the prison-house,* it will demonstrate that the tendency of his affliction is salutary and holy: there is a change of his mind and heart. It is the case of the prodigal, when brought to his right mind. There will be a renewal of grace. The man will be led to say, "*Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now*

have I learnt thy word—I was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke—but, *turn thou me, and I shall be turned: for thou art the Lord my God.* I am ashamed, *smiting on my thigh.*" Here is a fresh stirring up of grace. Here is a grieved spirit. *Create in me,* says David, *a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*

Brethren! *godly sorrow,* as you see, *worketh repentance,* and that *unto salvation:* it is the operation of a spiritual medicine; for, frequently, till godly sorrow worketh in this manner, a man has no suspicion of his state.

Gurnal, in his "Christian Armour," observes that the chastisements of God put us on examination. A man, who finds the top of his house let in water, goes up to repair the breach; and discovers that the whole roof, perhaps, is in a state of decay. Some particular sin may, in like manner, give us pain: when we examine, we find that this is connected with an alarming spiritual decay; and, if we take not warning, the soul will be inevitably ruined. Thus *godly sorrow worketh repentance unto* present *salvation;* and, of course, worketh salvation everlasting: so that Peter's weeping, the jailor's distress, the Corinthians' *carefulness* and *zeal* and *revenge,* were working to the salvation which God intended, and were symptoms of spiritual health.

We notice a man going back, perhaps, from Christ; and, from charitable motives, we hint—

"You are in an evil way. This thing has a bad tendency on your own soul: it will injure your family: it will bring a scandal on the Church." But the man resorts to extenuation: he offers palliatives: he may, perhaps, resent our faithfulness, and consider himself insulted. It is the direct reverse, where godly sorrow appears: when it is said to a penitent, *Thou art the man*, he will rather say, with David, *I have sinned!* and, with the Publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner!*

The repentance spoken of in the case of Judas was but remorse—the sorrow of this world, that worketh death; contrary, therefore, to the repentance that worketh salvation. The repentance of which the text speaks is a spiritual sensibility—a living man feeling, and tending to recovery. *I have gone astray*, says the Psalmist, *like a lost sheep: seek thy servant!*

My Dear Hearers, there is scarcely any worldly joy, but leaves a sting behind it: or, as one excellently expresses it, "What is sorrow, but the ghost of joy?" But godly sorrow is an affectionate return to God—a renewed act of communion with him; and must draw forth grateful thanks to Christ, the giver of this blessing; for *him hath God exalted to give repentance and remission of sins.*

2. But, the Apostle speaks also of the SORROW OF THE WORLD, as opposed to this *godly sorrow*.

The *sorrow of the world!*—There is far more of this than appears. Some of us, who have public

characters, as ministers or physicians, see a vast deal more of this than other men. Sometimes, when every thing seems easy and happy around a man, he will feel his heart almost broke: and will declare himself in such a state that none can suspect. Yet such an infatuation prevails, that a man will go on for years a careless, silly, unthinking creature—he weighs nothing—*to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant*—he wonders to find that any body should be in trouble—*he* has none!—just as you see that men intoxicated have no notion of the troubles of the world. But, when you look into life, you see it full of trouble.

Every one must have seen what distress an ungodly man has frequently found, in the view of loss, disappointment, or pain. *Raging, he teareth himself in his anger:* he will hear of nothing to pacify him: he will listen to no reason: he throws out implacable speeches against persons, who seem to have had no hand in his troubles. Thus doth the sorrow of the world work death.

Ahithophel was a wise man. He spake—and was reckoned as an oracle. But he is disappointed and chagrined: he cannot carry his point. What is his refuge?—*And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and—hanged himself!*

Ahab was a king; and had large domains, many

subjects, great riches. "I must have a garden of herbs." And he *spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs. And* when *Naboth said to Ahab, the Lord forbid it me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee,* what is his resource?—*Ahab came to his house, heavy and displeased—and laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread!* He cannot have the little portion! He must be sick, and throw himself on his bed, and have no comfort from any of his possessions! This is *the sorrow of the world.*

Haman enjoys whatever he can desire: for every thing which the king possesses is at his command. But Mordecai will not bow to him, as he enters the gate: his heart is torne asunder, because this poor Jew will not yield him obeisance. *The sorrow of the world worketh death!* and nothing better: no amendment; no improvement; no wisdom!

"*Get me,*" says Saul, "*a cunning woman—a woman of a familiar spirit.* I despair with respect to help from God, and now I will go to the Infernal Spirit for advice." And when he had taken this step, the next was to call on his armour-bearer, *Draw thy sword, and thrust me through!*

"Here," says Judas, "take this silver which I have had of you! *I have betrayed the innocent blood!*"—*What is that to us?*—The very spirit of the world! *See thou to that!* "Take the money!"

says he: "take it! take it! *I have betrayed the innocent blood!*" And what was his one resource?—*He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went, and hanged himself!*

Brethren! I am speaking of what is passing every day of our lives. You meet with these things in almost every newspaper you take up. What is the meaning of such an one having broke his heart?—*The sorrow of the world hath worked death!* Such an one is pining himself into a consumption? Why?—*The sorrow of the world is working death!* A rich man has shot himself!—For what reason?—*The sorrow of the world worketh death!*

These accounts are continually before our eyes: but, let us remember, that we do not meet with a thousandth part of the facts, which prove that the sorrow of this world worketh death.

And what tends to a present death—the impenitent state of such persons—we find, with the Bible in our hands, tends also to eternal death! So true it is, then, that, while *godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of, the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

II. I will make a few REFLECTIONS from what has been said.

1. We may hence learn the MALIGNANT NATURE OF SIN.

In prosperity sin leads the sinner to madness,

to extravagance, to ignorance of himself—to ruin! He is a most pitiable creature! In prosperity he is delirious.

He falls into trouble: then, surely, there is something like amendment, because recollection must be produced. No! no such thing! *The sorrow of the world worketh death.* Friends may hope; but, alas! sin has even poisoned his sorrows! Satan has a device with Judas in his despair; as well as when entrusted with the bag, to teach him to steal from it. Satan will teach a man to presume, to grasp, to run on carelessly: then he will teach him to despair; and will bring him a knife, a pistol, a halter; and will tell him—"That is the only cure!" So that sorrow, as well as joy, is poisoned by sin.

Every thing is wrong, when the heart is wrong. *The strong man armed seeks to keep his goods in peace;* and, if anything tries to disturb him, he will forge fetters of another kind.

Examine yourselves. Labour to know your state, in this respect. What is your dispensation? Does Satan seek to poison your sorrow? Does it do you no good, that you live in trouble? Are you as far from God as before? Have you not at all learned to look upward, and to beg of God to bring you to himself, and to give you a right mind? Under losses, do you still want to find a friend?—and have you no desire for the only one that can support you? Have you no ear to hear God

speaking in your affliction?—no prayer that God would look down, and make these things work together for your good? Alas! you remind me of that expression of the Wise Man, *Bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.* Learn, then, that sin is such a poison, that, if God does not deliver you, even your sorrows will work your death: for affliction and pain will not, of themselves, save a man; although, in God's hand, they have done mighty things. *Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

2. Let us remember, on this subject, WHAT A BLESSED MEDICINE TRUE RELIGION IS, though sorrow should be intimately mingled in the dispensation.

For you see, that, if sin grow up with worldly sorrow; yet godly repentance, like the fabled philosophers' stone, will turn all to gold. That will bless a man in prosperity, like Abraham; and it will bless a man in adversity, like Job. Where Christ is the physician, all shall work together for good. Whether lancets, or bitters, or caustics be in the physician's hand, he shall do good wherever he comes. *Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of.*

"*It is good for me,*" says David, "*that I have been afflicted.* I was going astray before, but godly sorrow wrought salvation for me." So that,

properly speaking, a skilful person—a man who has travailed in religion himself, and learnt the benefit of God's corrections—will frequently in his mind congratulate his friend while he feels for him, when passing through an operation. During the operation, he may feel most keenly; yet, when he sees the benefit produced, he will thank God for the affliction. Either in his own case, or in that of any friend, health is his object.

My Dear Hearers, let us adopt the maxim of Luther: "Burn, Lord! cut—do anything—only save!" Whatever be the means, only, *if by any means*, let me be saved!

3. Since godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, you see that THE CHURCH IS A VINEYARD, WHICH DEPENDS NO LESS ON CLOUDY DAYS THAN ON SUNSHINE, for its growth and improvement.

I must confess, that my own experience and observation lead me to prefer, in the preaching of the Gospel, the sun shining on the wall to nourish the fruit; yet, we see among us persons of a heady and obstinate disposition, calling for continual cordials. They think that they obtain no benefit from a sermon, unless they get comfort. "I did not profit," say such persons: "I got no good by the sermon:" when it was, perhaps, the design of God to set before them their plain duty, and the nature of their trials; and to shew them how to glorify him in their trials, and to escape the snares that are laid for their feet: but they got no comfort, therefore no good!

What sort of a patient would that be, who would say to a physician, "Your medicine was not pleasant. There was a bitterness in it. I cannot take a medicine which is not cheering to my spirits?" What sort of a patient is such an one?

Let us remember, therefore, that the Church depends on its cloudy and rainy days, as well as on its days of sunshine.

Suppose a man had looked at the Church of Corinth. "*What indignation!*" says he: "*what fear.* Is this a flourishing church?"—"Yes," says the Apostle, "it is: these are symptoms of health: these Christians hereby shew themselves to have feeling and life." A man, that feels caustics applied, is not mortified, but alive.

Let us endeavour, Brethren, thus to possess a sound and substantial religion: then it will be spiritual and experimental.

You pass through an orchard; and, when the wind is high, you hear a rustling of the leaves—great motion in the boughs: but, when you come to examine the tree, there is no fruit! But, says the Psalmist, *Blessed is the man, that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly—but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates in his law day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

SERMON XXV.

THE SEALING OF THE SPIRIT.

EPHESIANS i. 13, 14.

—Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.

HERE is a blessed character of the righteous —to be *sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*— to have *an earnest of their inheritance* before they obtain it. My Dear Hearers, I pray not that you may be people of rank or of fortune; for that might prove your ruin: but I earnestly pray God, that every one of you may be *sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,* and have the earnest of your inheritance in your hearts, while here on earth; and that you may enter the grave without fear, and not be ashamed when Christ cometh!

1. Let us EXPLAIN this high privilege; and consider what it is to be sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, and thereby to have the earnest of the inheritance.

2. Let us make some REMARKS on the subject.

I. We shall EXPLAIN what it is to be sealed with the Spirit of Promise, and to have the earnest of the inheritance.

It cannot mean an extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit; such as the working of Miracles: for the gift of miracles was not the earnest of the future inheritance. But this sealing of the Spirit is connected with our having an earnest; something in hand; something assured to us previous to that which is greater and better.

Nor can it mean the gift of Faith; however that may be the root of other graces: because it is said, *After that ye believed ye were sealed.*

It will be proper to consider the image here employed. What is sealing? Sealing is a common act among men, to ascertain a right and title to some property: as when a man writes his name on his property, it is as much as to say, "This is mine." It is common in deeds, to assure or ascertain a title to property or inheritance. It is common in commerce: merchants set their seals as a mark of their property. Thus, in Rev. vii. it is said that the servants of God had his seal in their foreheads: and, in the IXth of Ezekiel, it is said to the men that went forth with the slaughter weapons in their hands, *Go ye through the city, and smite—but come not near any man upon whom is the mark:* touch not any that are sealed.

Now, as in the sealing of wax, for instance, it is first softened to render it impressible: so God

says, by Ezekiel, *I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh:* that is, a soft and impressible heart. And we find, in fact, that this work of softening and impressing is carried on in a Christian as long as he lives.

In sealing, also, there is an impression left, corresponding to the seal.

The figure implies, therefore, "*After that ye believed,* it pleased God to stamp a character on you—to leave an impression—corresponding to the seal of the Spirit set on your hearts, *After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.* When ye became men, ye put away childish things: your will chose the better part: your affections were set on higher objects. When God, therefore, seals a man, he impresses on his heart a character: he impresses on his understanding, his will, and his affections, a character distinct from that which he once had.

Now, as a seal, in order to impress its image, must have a hand to use it; so the *Holy Spirit of promise* is this agent; he was promised by the prophets, he was promised by Christ, to this very end, that he should soften and make impressible by the application of his word to the heart—suggesting truth—elevating the soul to grasp at the things promised—enlarging the mind, and enlivening it in duty—sanctifying, satisfying, melting it; till, at length, the man shall say, *I sat down under*

his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

Brethren! a Christian receives the truth in the love of it. He has not only an elevating view of the doctrines of the Gospel, but there is a character impressed on his mind: he has not only a sentiment, but a spiritual taste.

Tell us not what such a man as Colonel Gardiner may have been before his conversion. He might be wicked, hardened, sensual, far from God! But, tell me what Colonel Gardiner was after he received the truth: after that truth, by the Spirit of God, had impressed his character in holiness, humility, love of God, in a peaceable disposition toward his neighbour, in a general desire to do good. Tell me what he was afterward—A *light in the world! salt in the earth, that had not lost its savour! a city set upon a hill, that could not be hid!* a mark for the profligate to *shoot their arrows at, even bitter words!*

The same may be said of Lord Rochester. He might be a monster: he *was* a monster; and every man, who had any regard to his character, would have avoided him. But tell me what the man was, after he believed the truth, and was *sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.* He stands a record—a miracle of the grace of God, and of the power of God; and tells us plainly, as a matter of fact, what it is to be *sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.*

"But," say you, "granting all this, how is this seal the earnest of our inheritance?"

Earnest, as you know, is a part of payment; a security for the remainder: it is common among us, to deliver up a thing of great value, by a kind of pledge or earnest: a house is delivered up, by delivering up the key.

Now, the seal of which I have been speaking differs from a common seal among men, in that it is both seal and earnest. A seal may be annexed to a deed, but it may be cut off from the deed: the deed remains, but there is no seal. But, with this seal, God seems to deliver the future inheritance: as if he should say, "They are inseparable: this shall be an authentic pledge, earnest, and evidence—heaven begun in the soul!" The Spirit of Promise, when he seals a character, becomes a Spirit of Holiness, a Spirit of Consolation; giving us a taste of what we shall become, since we are heirs of the future inheritance.

The present illumination, therefore, which a Christian receives, is a pledge of that everlasting light to which he is passing. The present love of holiness, which God gives him, is an earnest of perfect holiness among *the spirits of just men made perfect.* The present comfort, rest, and satisfaction, which a godly man receives, is a taste of that fulness of joy which he shall find in the presence of God.

And every Christian receives his portion of this

earnest: nor did I ever know a single Christian, who, at the very lowest ebb, would part with this sealing of the Holy Spirit, this newness of character, for all that the world could propose. *In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.*

If the faithful, therefore, are sealed by the Spirit of God, then, though the moralist may ridicule the thing, though an antinomian may reject it, though an enthusiast may expose it; yet, *let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* A counterfeit proves that there is real coin.

Let me, then, call on every one of you here present. May God grant, that I may never so spend my time, nor you so idly waste yours, as to consider points of this nature in a merely speculative way, to pass away our hour! My Dear Hearers, the Gospel is every thing or nothing! Examine, therefore, whether God has sent his Holy Spirit to enlighten, soften, and impress your hearts: for, if you could speak with the tongue of men or angels, and had not this holy impression——a consciousness of the nothingness of present things; and a hope full of immortality, that shall lead you to stretch out to the mark of the prize set before you—all your hearing will only tend to condemnation.

Whenever, therefore, this work of the Spirit of God begins to be spoken lightly of, ask yourselves a question; "What is the image and superscrip-

tion written on this?" No doubt Satan has, herein, a very important end—to sink and degrade the truth. There never was a time, since the truth was first set forth, but the evil heart of man, influenced by *the god of this world*, was always attempting to degrade the truth: some taking it up as an opiate; and others professing it, as a means of accomplishing some sinister end. But, *Thus saith the Lord: If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

Examine, therefore, whether the Spirit has impressed the truth on your mind, to any saving purpose.

II. Let me make a few REMARKS on this subject.

1. Be CAUTIOUS OF GRIEVING THAT HOLY SPIRIT, WHEREBY YE ARE SEALED UNTO THE DAY OF REDEMPTION—that Holy Spirit, who put vitality and effect into the truth proposed.

It is impossible that you can trifle with sin, it is impossible that you can go on unlawful ground, without grieving the Holy Spirit. You may fall, and you may rise again: but, if you go out of the way, you take consequences on yourself; and, if you meet an enemy there, you are on unconsecrated ground. And *we are not ignorant of his devices:* we know how he presents before you the innocence of this, and the harmlessness of that: there is no danger at all in making such and such

experiment! there is no contagion in the breath of wicked men! there is no harm at all in trying how far some new-fangled doctrine may lead! Be cautious of making attempts, where there is so much danger. The path of duty is the path of safety. Be cautious, therefore, of grieving the Holy Spirit of promise, by going out of the way, when it is evident who is the counsellor, when it is evident that Satan is endeavouring to surprise you off God's ground.

Nor should you give way to a repining spirit:—"How sad a way! How painful the impression God is making, in his providence! so that I seem rather like an offender punished, than a child brought into his family!" Do you know what effort it requires to stamp a medal? The very building will shake with the blow! You are led, perhaps, by a way that is not to your wish: it is not the way of ambition, but an humbling, sanctifying way, not approved of flesh and blood; but does it lead to God? does it stamp a character? If affliction put you upon praying; if it lead you to say, with Israel, *I will return unto my first husband, for then was it better with me than now;* if it does this, remember, that, though the stroke of a sanctified affliction may be very heavy, though the stamping of the character may make flesh and blood rebel, yet you will bless God through eternity that he would even thus stamp his image on you—that he would even thus make you meet

for the inheritance, of which he had already given you an earnest.

2. Let me SUGGEST A CAUTION TO YOU WITH RESPECT TO THIS EARNEST.

A seal is not to be disputed, because it is not perfect. Take a case, which occurs almost daily. You receive a letter, or a bond: the seal has been affixed to it—the true seal: but the impression is not perfect. Do you doubt the reality of the seal, because the impression was not complete? No: you say, "It might have been sealed better, but it is a true seal." In a counterfeit seal, the impression may be strong and well defined; yet the seal is good for nothing—a counterfeit—it wants authenticity!

But, in the case before us, the Judge can neither deceive, nor be deceived. If you are led to God, and stamped with the character which God describes as belonging to his children; though it may be imperfect, though but little of the impression may appear, yet let us rejoice that it is a genuine impression. A man of integrity, whose heart is really affected, may well lament that he does not come nearer the true character; yet let him take heed how he *despises the day of small things.*

3. It appears from the text, that HE, THAT HATH THIS SEAL, MAY REST SECURE OF THAT INHERITANCE OF WHICH IT IS AN EARNEST. *Which*, says the Apostle, *is the earnest of your inheritance.*

Of his own will, God has made the impression. I cannot make it. Of all the means of speaking that I can devise, with all the consciousness that I have of the importance of the thing, I cannot make an impression on your hearts, and you are witnesses that I cannot. You know how long—how many years—some of you have heard these truths in this place, without any impression at all! You have lived like the rest of the world! Who then makes the impression where it is made?—God:—*that Holy Spirit of promise, who is to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Of his own will begat he us:* he has impressed our hearts. Christ has purchased the possession, and the Holy Spirit applies it, and gives the earnest of it. If we are sealed, it is by his will.

God, therefore, by his prophet, seems to say, "Lift up your eyes: look around: behold the starry heavens: they shall *vanish like smoke:* they shall *wax old as doth a garment:* they shall be folded together, and thrown aside, as a worne-out vesture. But *my righteousness shall remain for ever: my salvation shall never be abolished.* Every thing which you see shall pass away: but my sealing shall never be destroyed."

A theatre may charm the eye with the variety of its scenes; and, for the moment, a man may imagine himself on enchanted ground: but, if he feels that he has in his possession the earnest of

some inheritance, on which he builds his hope and expectation for future life; if he has a pledge about him, however small, that such and such an estate is purchased for him and conveyed to him; by that earnest he recollects himself, and says, "These are pretty things—pleasing to the eye: but——but——they are not like my pledge! They are things that have a glare, and seem to suit the senses for a moment or two; but they are not the solid property of which I am possessed. When gone by, therefore, I care not about them: the pledge, the earnest, is all my felicity!"

That you and I may feel thus toward our heavenly inheritance, and enjoy it in prospect in time, and in possession through eternity, may God grant for Jesus Christ's sake!

SERMON XXVI.

ON CHASTISEMENT.

HEBREWS xii. 5, 6.

Ye have forgotten the Exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son, whom he receiveth.

AMONG the variety of subjects, on which a Minister is called to treat, many may suit particular cases; but, when he speaks of Affliction, he speaks of that which is sure to interest every one, at one period or other of their lives. When affliction comes, they will, perhaps, remember what has been said with reference to their case; for *man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

But it appears from the passage before us, that persons are perplexed in their afflictions, chiefly because they *forget the exhortation which speaketh unto them as unto children.* To Christians, more particularly, these words are addressed: God, treating them as his children, calls on them not to *despise the chastening of the Lord, nor to faint when they are rebuked;* and that, because it is his

common method of proceeding—the dispensation of the Christian—that, *whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

From the words of the text, without having any respect to the particular case of the Hebrew converts to whom they were addressed, we shall consider

1. That it is THE HIGH PRIVILEGE OF A CHRISTIAN, THAT HIS AFFLICTIONS, WHATEVER THEY MAY BE, ARE BUT THE DISCIPLINE OF A FATHER.

2. The TWO DANGEROUS EXTREMES CONCERNING WHICH WE ARE ADMONISHED IN THE TEXT, and into which men are apt to fall under this parental chastisement: *My son,* DESPISE THOU NOT: and, *My son,* FAINT NOT *under it.*

I. We are to consider the high PRIVILEGE of a Christian: that his afflictions are but the discipline of a father.

The Apostle here states the common case of Christians. Every one of them is brought into the privilege of the sons of God, and treated as such. *If ye are Christ's,* says the Apostle, *then are ye Abraham's seed. To as many as received him, to them gave he the privilege to become the sons of God.* They are spoken of as having been chosen of old, received into the family of heaven, and

treated as children sent to school, under education preparing for glory. They may be, for a time, under great trials. They may be tried as the widow was by the unjust judge, when she came to be avenged of her adversary: *Hear*, said our Lord, *what the unjust judge saith: Lest this woman trouble me by her continual coming, I will avenge her: and shall not God avenge his own elect, that cry day and night unto him?*

Fatherly chastisement, therefore, is inseparably connected with the adoption of children, and the love that God bears to them. If then a Christian should say, Why am I thus? and why do such afflictions thus surround me?"—the answer is evident: Because you have a father, and because it is his method: *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth: If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But, if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.* You have then no evidence that you are under education: you have no evidence that God is leading you by that narrow path, pointed out by himself, suited to your case and condition; by which you will not only arrive at glory, but be made *meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.*

Not a day passes over our heads, but we have an illustration of this case in our own families. Have we children?—Why do we put them under

task-masters and tutors? Why?—that their minds may be trained to patience and submission. Do we treat our servants thus?

A Christian may, under a sense of his high privilege and his high calling, walk gratefully as it becometh one of the sons of God: yet there are cases and circumstances in which even such men as David, Hezekiah, and Peter experience that it is good to have fear as well as love in exercise; and that when love fails, it is good to have fear kept alive in the heart, and to have an experience of the affliction, and misery, and pain that sin occasions, and that it is an evil thing and bitter to depart from the living God.

Does a man argue, "I am a son; but I know not trouble?" I will say to such an one, "Stay a little: perhaps it is at the door: and it will be well if you do not faint, under what you have soon to meet with. The Apostle tells us, that all the children of God are partakers of this dispensation."

Does another say, "I am so chastised, the rod is so heavy on my back, that I fear I am not a son?" This man forgets *the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children;* for this dispensation of suffering is rather a mark that you are a child: it is God's constant method: *for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?—Wherefore,* says the Apostle, *lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make*

straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed.

"But," say you, "I am more distressed, because a good man is the cause of my suffering." Here you dwell on the instrument! Here you forget *the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children!* The scourge may consist of various cords; and any instrument will serve God's purpose when he chooses to employ it. Be thankful, therefore, that God will teach, and correct, and chastise you; and that, by any means which may have a tendency to bring you nearer to himself.

What have any of us learnt to purpose, but in this way? so that we have had reason to say, with David, "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted: before I was afflicted I went astray:* I had *forgotten the exhortation, which speaketh unto me as unto a child;* but afterwards I perceived the peaceable fruits of righteousness arise from my trouble. I perceived the necessity of that education, which I thought trying and severe."

Lord Bacon remarks, that, however temporal prosperity might be promised to the Church under the old dispensation, affliction, and suffering, and trial, are the promises made to the Church under the new.

We see, therefore, that it is one of the privileges of a Christian, that his afflictions, of whatsoever

nature they be, are but the discipline of a father.

II. I was to consider the TWO DANGEROUS EXTREMES of which we are here admonished, while under this fatherly chastisement.

We satisfy ourselves often in avoiding the error on the right-hand, while an equally dangerous one lies on the left. A traveller, in passing over a bridge, thinks perhaps that he cannot go too far on one side to avoid a dangerous precipice on the other; but there is danger on both sides.

To *despise* and to *faint* are the two extremes to which we are liable under our sufferings. Let us consider these extremes.

1. Pride will stand up, and hold out long. There is a stiff neck, an unbending spirit, an indisposition to yield. It requires many severe strokes to bring a man before God: nor will these avail, unless the grace of God accompany them. The man is infatuated: he goes from one broken cistern to another. He tries, if possible, to build himself up. He has no thought of returning to God.

This is DESPISING the chastening of the Lord.

There is a remarkable illustration of this subject in the second chapter of the prophecy of Hosea. Israel said, *I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink. Therefore, behold,* saith the

Lord, *I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths:* I will bring on disappointment, and discipline, and chastisement, till she be taught to say, *I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.*

You have seen a perverse child, because you take away the knife from it, that it shall not be in danger, dash its bread to the ground.—Thus is it with those who will have their own will and way. This stubbornness of heart, this stiffness of neck, this refusing to bow down, and to say, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven*—this is the temper which leads us to despise the chastening of the Lord.

A man may say, "I thank God I do not faint, whatever be the circumstances of my dispensation: but I bear up under it." Do you despise it? do you neglect it? do you not at all listen to the voice of God in it? or do you say, with Job, *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me?* In this way men are seen *kicking against the pricks*, as the Scripture expresses it; and to such I would say, Take heed, while you despise the gentle stroke, and think lightly of what God is doing, lest he take to himself his great power, and bring a heavier stroke on you; for he hath said, *He, that being often admonished, hardeneth his neck,* despiseth and neglecteth the chastisement, *shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

2. But there is another extreme: there is a FAINTING under the chastening of the Lord.

Unbelief is the cause of this fainting. It is said concerning Moses, that *he endured*—he made a stand—he bore up, *as seeing him who is invisible.* If we look only, as Peter did, at the waves around us, we shall inevitably sink. We shall then, with Job, feel our affliction, and our spirits unable to meet the affliction: or, like Jeremiah, when he sunk in the pit, we shall speak as if we were cut off and deceived: or, like Elijah, our impatience under our dispensation may be such, that we cannot wait till God shall stand forth as our avenger and deliverer; but shall say, *Let me die! it is enough: take away my life.*

Fainting tends to put a misconstruction on what God is doing. Thus Jacob said, *All these things are against me.* Thus David said, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.* We lean to our own understandings: we see but a very little of God's design: unbelief prevails: we say, "All this is against me! Then pride and peevishness will make us sink, as Jonah did under his dispensation; so that, instead of trusting our Father, we forget his exhortation.

A man, under trials, will sometimes say, "The affliction lies so heavy on me, that I cannot support it. I wish to die:" that is, you forget the exhortation: you consult your own understanding; you faint under the chastening of the Lord.

But the exhortation is, to take away the two extremes: neither despise the correction of the Lord; nor faint under it, though thou art chastened.

More especially is this exhortation a call on us to examine our state. One stroke may follow another, to rouse a man—to shew him that this is not his rest; that he is seeking repose in the present world, which God has determined he shall not find.

If you are under a dispensation of alarming chastisement, and God is calling for your attention, and awakening you from your slumber, take it up in this way, and say, with Job, "*Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me:* let me know what is that besetting sin, that secret idol, which thou art opposing. Make me to understand thy way; and let me hear thy voice in the particular dispensation under which I stand."

How strange and absurd to imagine that God would suffer his children to act inconsistently with their Christian profession, without contending with them as a father would with his son, who was taking wicked courses! This contention implies that he is not abandoned. It is as much as if God should say, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I make thee as Admah, or set thee as Zeboim?*

Such a man is called to examine if there be not a cause; such as there was in the camp of Israel. Every thing went wrong there. Joshua mourned,

that the armies of Israel should fall before the heathen: but he was called to search if there were not a secret evil in the camp, if there were not some wedge of gold, or some Babylonish garment; something that was like a canker, like a plague, a mortal plague in the camp, which must be removed before the chastisement could be taken away.

Let me call on such as have not diligently examined their hearts,—on such as have not proceeded with that simplicity, and watchfulness, and integrity, which a Christian ought to exercise —examine whether God is not contending with you: and if you are under a dispensation of purification, enquire whether you meet it with the patient enduring of a child. God hath said expressly that he is a father; and that, as a father, he correcteth his children, and useth such discipline and means as may bring them into the right way, conform them to his mind, produce contrition in the heart, and pull down the strong-holds of pride and vain imaginations, and root out the carnal idolatry which is apt to creep into the heart of every Christian.

Remember, then, *the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children.* Pray for the increase of faith. This will bring the invisible things of God before you, and shew you the narrow path in which he has been used to lead his children. Give him unlimited confidence, and beseech the Holy

Spirit to enable you to trust God in the darkest night into which he can possibly bring you. Consider past times and experience; and what is recorded in Scripture of those who have been thus led before you.

Consider the remarkable language of Job: *Oh, that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!* that is, I wish to understand the cause: but, while *I would fill my mouth with arguments* upon it, yet, says he, *behold! I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left-hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right-hand, that I cannot see him.* What is to be done in such a case?—give him unlimited confidence; and say, as Job says in the next verse, *He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold:* he is a refiner, that sitteth to purify the sons of Levi; and the end will be, that, though I cannot find out what he is doing as to the particulars, yet I know the end will be, that, when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Wherefore, says the Apostle, *seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses*—who have left an express testimony, and have weathered the difficulties they had to meet with; who have borne the burden and heat of the day, have endured and have not fainted—*let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily*

beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: he followed the same path; and, *for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself—ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin,* as Jesus did, and his disciples after him. *And ye have forgotten the exhortation, which speaketh unto you as unto children;* and declares plainly, that the danger is not only despising the chastening of the Lord, but fainting under it, and not recollecting that *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

That you and I may lay these words to heart, may God, of his infinite mercy, grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXVII.

REMEMBRANCE OF CHRISTIAN MINISTERS.

Preached January 3, 1808, on Occasion of the Death of the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

HEB. xiii. 7, 8.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

I HAVE been absent from you this morning, to improve the departure of that venerable servant of Christ, the Rev. JOHN NEWTON. His conversion to God was singular: his services have been eminent; and his spirit so entirely what we are taught to consider as characteristic of a Christian,—so mild, so gentle, so bent on glorifying God and recovering his fallen creatures—that I could not but still dwell in my mind on the deceased, after I had done the work appointed me. This has led me to the present subject.

Let us endeavour,

1. TO EXPLAIN these words.

2. TO IMPRESS them on your hearts and consciences.

I. We are to EXPLAIN these words.

St. Paul, the *wise master-builder*, had been *laying the foundation*. He had been setting forth Christ as the glory of the Gospel. In this chapter he gives some general rules, and one of them is the passage before us: *Remember them which have the rule over you.* It might be more exactly rendered, *Remember your guides:* remember your leaders: remember whom God has appointed, as your particular shepherds; for God employs men to assist men; God employs men to recover men. *I will make you*, Christ said, *fishers of men.*

Remember them, says the Apostle, *which have the rule over you*, which have been your guides and leaders, *who have spoken unto you the word of God.* As though he had said, "Visionaries may come among you, who will say, *I have dreamed, I have dreamed:* I call you not to remember them. Yea, *there shall be grievous Wolves*, and perhaps in sheeps' clothing; who shall have a design to devour and destroy the flock: keep clear of them: take care of yourselves: no greater frauds and iniquities have been practised than in the religious world. Others will bring you Traditions, and try to set up something in the stead of Christianity, as the dead image of a living thing: I do not say, Remember them. Some will think of nothing but their Party: for, *All seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's.* Others will come among you in the form of ministers, who are mere

Hypocrites, and see nothing but the morsel of bread: *Put me, I pray thee, into the priest's office, that I may eat a morsel of bread.* I call you not to remember such as these: but *remember them that have spoken unto you the word of God;* who have themselves understood it and felt its influence, and are appointed to minister it to others. Do not forget their labours, their zeal, their affection. Remember them as your best friends: if they have reproved you, it is a proof of friendship: if they have borne with your infirmities, it is because they knew their own, and were called to be nursing-fathers: if they have tried to entice you, to *draw you with the cords of a man and the bonds of love, esteem them very highly for their work's sake:* and if they have maintained their Christian profession, though at the risk of being called fools and enthusiasts, remember that they are such as God commends, having found those servants with their loins girded, and their lamps burning."

But they are gone!—"And, therefore," say some, "what more have we to do with them? what can they profit us?"—In one view, indeed, they are gone: they are called away: they are taken home: they *have fought the good fight, and finished their course, and kept the faith.* But, in another sense, though they are dead, they yet speak: they will retain a hold on the consciences of those who heard them, while any tenderness remains therein. Of some it may be said, that they

never die: they yet live: they yet speak: they have been the instruments of more good after their death, than they were throughout their lives.

But the Apostle adds, *Follow their Faith.* As though he had said, "Follow not their peculiarities,—their infirmities. Say, 'This is a *man*,—a poor creature at the best.' But follow their Faith."

Follow the DOCTRINES which they have maintained: let their testimony remain in your consciences, for you must give an account thereof to *Him who shall judge the quick and dead.* This shall fully appear in the great day of account, when it shall be said, "What did you hear from that leader, that guide, that minister, whom I sent to speak to your heart? *I stood at the door and knocked,* while he was expostulating with you. He cried to you, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* He proclaimed the remedy, appointed for the misery and guilt of the world. No man could say, '*There is no hope!* I know not what to do! I am a guilty creature, and there is no refuge! *What must I do to be saved?*' He cried aloud, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;* for he was *exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.* Your minister declared to you the grace of God's Spirit, whose breath could raise the dry bones into a living man."

No man more consistently declared and exhibited these doctrines than the deceased Minister of whom I am speaking.

Whose faith follow—follow not only the Doctrines of their faith: but the EXERCISES and HABITS of their faith: for it is one thing to speculate on the truth,—to give a mere assent to it: and it is another thing to have it in exercise, to *endure as seeing him who is invisible*, and to bring it into action in all the circumstances of life. I feel, in this respect, a great and lamentable defect in my own heart, and observe it in the conduct of others. Faith is not to be considered only with reference to the grand points of justification and sanctification, and our being glorified in the end: but a Christian is to be a man of faith with reference to all circumstances. Follow the faith, therefore, of Christian Ministers, in endeavouring to bring it into daily exercise, and habitual employ.

Follow the FRUIT of their faith. Imitate their zeal, their labours of love, their patience, their usefulness, their conflicts, their instant prayer.

Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Some read these words thus: *considering the end of their conversation, which was to set forth Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.* This is, in itself, good counsel; but it is not the sense of the passage: for, when the Apostle says, *considering the* END *of their con-*

versation, he means *consider the* ESCAPE *which they made.*

The word which he employs is used but once more in the New Testament. In the tenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where the Apostle says, *There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Observe—*make a way to* ESCAPE: it is the same word that is here used—*Consider the escape which they have made*—their exit—their outlet—their end; how honourable, as good soldiers, and servants, and stewards of Jesus Christ.

When Christian Ministers have finished their work, and God calls them home, they may depart on their beds: but, if they even depart at the stake, they will cry, "Victory!" No man can rob them of their crown. They have overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil; and, in their going out, they cry, "Victory!"

But some will say, "They are gone! Elijah is, indeed, honourably taken away; but we are ready to rend our mantles, and say, "*Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* Where is our king, and creator, and benefactor, and friend?—The Apostle answers—*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever:* He is not gone! Jesus Christ is

still the same! He sends a servant: he takes him away again. He communicates special light to a particular town, village, or congregation: he withdraws that light again. What! shall a man say we are all ruined and desolate because the Master has called his servant home? No! *Jesus Christ* remains *the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

He was *the same,* YESTERDAY, to the Ancient Church. He appeared in a human form under that dispensation. He *was with them in the wilderness.* He was the sum of their promises and prophecies; their lamb; their city of refuge; their brazen serpent: these were only so many emblems, pointing out to them, that in him they had all they wanted for time and for eternity. *They tempted Christ in the wilderness.* They had water from the rock, but *that rock was Christ,* or an image of Christ. So that he was *the same,* YESTERDAY.

He is *the same,* TO-DAY, in the New-Testament Church, to us now living. He is here! He is in this church: for *where two or three are met together,* he says, *there am I.* A faithful minister can look round him, and see what miracles Jesus Christ has wrought in his congregation *to-day:* he will mark one, whose blind eyes he opened: he will mark another, called from a cavern of death and despair: he will say, "Behold! Jesus Christ is working miracles *to-day,*" If men see him not

to-day, and limit their faith to what he did when on earth, it is because their eyes are darkened. Let them but come to him:—let them but trust him:—let them but take hold of eternal life in him: and then he will say to them, as he did to Martha, *Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*—thou shouldest see that I am here *to-day*.

And he is *the same*, FOR EVER—to all succeeding generations—to the end of the world. Wicked men may plan to destroy his work; wicked men may labour that the sun shall not shine in this place or in that: but they forget, among their plans, that Christ is *the Alpha and the Omega;* that *he openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.* He *is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

But, many will sit to hear us expound Scripture; and sit with satisfaction, provided we do not come home to them. I speak, therefore, to such CARELESS PERSONS. *We preach Christ crucified: to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness:* and we shew you to-day, a monument of the power of Jesus Christ, in the man who has lately departed—a monument, which seems to be inscribed with these words, *That, in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his conversion through Jesus Christ,*—a monument of grace! Remember, therefore, his testimony: he has spoken in this pulpit. Remem-

ber his blessed end; and remember your own end, which will shortly come. He could not save you, though he could preach to you: I cannot save you, though I can preach to you: I can only say, with the Apostle, *Would to God, that not only thou, but all who hear me this day, were altogether such as I am!* I was going to say, and I will not refrain from saying, that God himself cannot save you, as you are: I repeat it, God cannot save the unconverted, hardened, careless, unbelieving sinner, as he is. He can touch the heart: he can work faith in the heart: he can give it sensibility, and make it a heart of flesh: but a sinner, as he is! a careless thoughtless sinner, as he is, to be saved! God must deny himself, if he were thus to save him. *Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?* Either you or God must change, or you cannot live together. Remember, then, what you have received. Remember the necessity of having faith in exercise. Satisfy not yourselves with crying out, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* You must be in earnest; and must come, as the prodigal, back to your God. Cry aloud to God, therefore, to turn your hearts, and change your dispositions: and to enable you to come smiting on your breast, like the publican, and saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner!*

My DEAR BRETHREN! *is Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever?*—I call you

to pray earnestly to God, that a double portion of the spirit of those servants, whom he has lately taken to himself, may rest on those that remain. Coldness, torpidity, and a comparative indifference prevail too much among those, who should be more inflamed with the truths of the Gospel. Pray, earnestly, then, that God would raise up faithful labourers for his vineyard. The harvest is ready, but the labourers are few.

Let us remember, too, that we also are called to be ready; for our Lord *cometh at such a time as we know not*. And, however a man may put off these things while he is in health, and has a prospect of living many years, yet a dying time is a very awful time. If a man be not hardened and stupid indeed, his conscience will then speak out: he will have a lively apprehension of that future state, into which he is going; and to meet which, he feels himself wholly unprepared. *Now*, therefore, *is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation*. Nothing more clearly shews the subtlety of Satan, and the stupidity of the carnal heart, than our putting off these things, till it pleases God to say, *Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee*. May God grant that we may lay these things to heart! that, whenever our Master comes, he may find our loins girded and our lamps burning!

SERMON XXVIII.

ON TEMPTATION.

JAMES i. 12.

Blessed is the Man that endureth Temptation: for, when he is tried, he shall receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.

THE generality of mankind judge according to the report of their senses; and name things good or evil, as their senses report them. They call, therefore, for ease, for power, or for honour: and they pursue; and endeavour, at any rate, to overtake them.

But the report of God, who perfectly sees from the beginning to the end of things, speaks a contrary language: for he says, *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for, when he is tried, he shall receive a crown of life.*

Let us, from the words of the text,

1. Consider WHAT IT IS TO ENDURE TEMPTATION.

2. Enquire BY WHAT MEANS TEMPTATION IS ENDURED.

3. View THE BLESSED ISSUE OF ENDURING

TEMPTATION: *When he is tried, he shall receive a crown of life.*

I. Let us enquire WHAT IT IS TO ENDURE TEMPTATION. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.*

In this place, and in many other parts of Scripture, *temptation* signifies any kind of trial.

It may arise from the World: like that, which Abraham was called to endure, when he was directed to leave his country and his father's house, and to turn his back on his idols; to become a stranger and pilgrim, and to wander as such in the world; to meet with troubles, difficulties, opposition, and contradiction of sinners. Or it may be like that of Moses, who, when he had opportunities to rise greatly in life, turned away his face from all these things, and became an outcast in enduring *the reproach of Christ.*

Our trial may arise from the Flesh; which, as in the case of David, will assault a man, and seem even to alter his very character; so that he no longer seems to be either *the man after God's own heart*, or to have anything like a heart for God at all: he has suffered under the powerful attacks of temptation addressed to his senses.

Or temptation may be a trial immediately proceeding from Satan: like that of Job; who, in the midst of his ease and possessions, was given into Satan's power, to be harassed and disturbed by

him. This was, indeed, temptation and trial. So it is said, that *Satan provoked David to number Israel:* it was a severe and critical temptation, and David fell by it.

Sometimes the trial may come, for wise ends, from God himself. Thus it is said concerning Abraham, *it pleased the Lord to tempt Abraham*, i. e. to try him: and therefore he said, *Take now thy son, thy only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him up for a burnt-offering.* Here the trial, or temptation, proceeded immediately from God himself, as the trial of Abraham's faith and obedience.

But, says the Apostle, *Blessed is the man, that endureth temptation*, of whatever kind it be: whether from the world, or from the flesh, or from Satan, or more immediately sent of God: *Blessed is the man, that endureth temptation.*

But what is meant by enduring temptation?

Enduring temptation is very contrary to the case of which we have been hearing this morning: Balaam sought to run into temptation: he seems, if I may be allowed the expression, to have even teazed God to let him go to the court of Balak, that he might be promoted to honour. Saul, when in trouble, would seek relief from a witch: this is running into temptation.

Enduring temptation is very different, too, from merely meeting with it, like Moses in the wilderness. The absence of Moses left the people to

their own inventions; and, with their inventions, they proceeded so far as to set up a golden calf, and to call *that* the God which had brought them out of Egypt.

It is to be distinguished, also, from a single resistance. A man rouses his mind; and is enabled, with resolution, to say—"No! this is an attack on my faith, virtue, and happiness. I will not go!"—when, perhaps, on the very next temptation, he falls.

But *the man, that endureth temptation*, is the man, who has learnt and is enabled to bear up under it; or, as we sometimes express ourselves, he will weather it. He expects it; and, when it comes on him, he is not surprised. He knows that it is impossible to give place to it, in any degree, with safety: he resolves, therefore, by the help of God, to make a stand; and though the current may run strong against him, yet he certainly knows, that he must either go against the current, or be carried away and perish for ever.

Such a man was Enoch; who, in the midst of a wicked and perverse world, is represented as walking with God; a man of God; ever watchful on the Lord's side, and against the dangerous attacks of an enemy.

Such a character was Noah, *being warned of God*, and *moved with fear, he prepared an ark*; and did not stand to consider what other men

would say. He might hear some call him an enthusiast; others suppose him to be mad, and that his dreaming of a deluge was the greatest proof of his madness. But he made a stand, and went on: he endured the temptation.

Thus did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Joseph, in particular, endured temptations, not only in the enmity and cruelty of his brethren, but in reproach and sufferings arising from his integrity. He was thrown into prison; not for a day, nor a year: but he must go on enduring one of the darkest dispensations that ever man had to endure; yet he bore it patiently, and, as it is said of Moses, *he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.* Still, he hung on the truth of God. Still, he referred his cause to him. He seemed to say, with St. Paul, *None of these things move me: neither count I my life dear unto myself.*

It was in the same spirit that we find Daniel and the three children enduring and bearing up under their peculiar trials, in the furnace and the den of lions.

It was this that left the Apostles, in the midst of opposition, as sheep among wolves. *We are troubled,* says St. Paul, in the fourth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, *we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed: we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.* How is

this? How did they weather this trial? The latter part of the chapter puts us in possession of their secret. *For which cause we faint not: but, though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* "We are called," as if they had said, to "endure; but it is but for a moment: it is, comparatively, *light affliction; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things, which are seen; are temporal; but the things, which are not seen, are eternal.*"

Brethren! mark here a grand distinction between a Christian and a man of the world. The man of the world looks only at *the things which are seen:* he is overcome by them: they overwhelm him: they infatuate him: he cannot endure them: he has no true wisdom, no right understanding, no spirituality. But, says the Apostle, *We look not at the things which are seen;* for these we feel to be temporal and momentary: but those *which are not seen,* we know to be durable and eternal.

In this way, Brethren! I would answer the question, "What is it to endure temptation? It is thus, that *the righteous holds on his way; and he, that hath clean hands, waxeth stronger and stronger.* It is thus, that he becomes *a stranger and pilgrim upon earth.*

II. But I anticipate what I was secondly to speak on, namely, BY WHAT MEANS TEMPTATION IS ENDURED.

By what means is temptation endured by the man who is here spoken of as blessed? for a cause must be equal to its effect: and, therefore, no sudden starts of enthusiasm, no momentary impressions, however warm, will be adequate to this trial. For, to endure temptation, a man must be prepared for continual difficulty: it is to-morrow's business, as well as that of to-day.

Temptation is not endured by one vice overcoming and casting out another. It is not, for instance, the victory of pride over lust: but faith enables a man to make his stand *in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation;* and to *shine as a light in the world,* having *a hope full of immortality.*

You will see an account of this "royal way," as it has been called, in the XIth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. There we see a procession of characters—determined men—spiritual heroes; who, by faith, and hope, and love, endured and suffered; feeling the grace of God which was given them adequate to the trial.

The case of St. Paul himself, is very expressly related. And there is, doubtless, great wisdom in this particular relation, because it puts us into full possession of the method by which a Christian is enabled, through life, to endure temptation.

The case is related in the XIIth chapter of St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians. *There was given to me*, says the Apostle, *a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.* And, so sharp was the thorn, and so tormenting the buffeting, that, he adds, *for this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee.* As though he had said, "You must endure the temptation; however painful, however incessant, yet you must endure. *Blessed is the man, that endureth temptation;* not the man, that is delivered from *all* temptation. You must endure: but, *my grace is sufficient for thee:* I can enable thee to endure it: I can send a supply of strength: I can *uphold with the right-hand of my righteousness.* And, besides, I can teach you this grand truth, that *my strength is made perfect in your weakness:* when you are most feeble and inadequate, when patience seems to be almost worne out, at that time it is that I will step in to succour you, to hold you up, and to enable you to endure." The Apostle was so instructed on this point, that he adds, *I take pleasure in infirmities* and *reproaches:* now I want for nothing: the trial is come, and it is the dispensation and will of God.

Of Christ himself, our great example and forerunner, it is said, *for the joy that was set before him,* he *endured the cross, despising the shame: and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God.*

Let us, therefore, says the Apostle, *run with patience the race set before us*, LOOKING UNTO JESUS. *This*, says St. John, *is the victory that overcometh the world, even our* FAITH—our being enabled to look for the strength of Christ to be made perfect in our weakness, and to lay hold on him the rock of ages. *Which* HOPE, says St. Paul, *we have as an anchor of the soul:* does the sailor, when his ship is tossed with fierce winds, and he fears every moment that it will be dashed in pieces, throw out his anchor, and hold fast thereby, that the vessel may be able to endure the power and fierceness of the tempest? so, says the Apostle, we have Hope, *which we have as an anchor of the soul.*

David was despised and insulted by men, who spake of stoning him in his calamity; while his army was scattered, with the loss of their substance, their wives, and children. This was a severe trial: this was a strong temptation: what was David to do? even what he did: he *encouraged himself in the Lord his God:* he referred the matter to him; and in so doing, he was enabled to endure.

"*On the left-hand,*" says Job, *where he doth work, I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right-hand, that I cannot see him.* It is a severe trial; and I am called to weather it in the dark: but, God knoweth his own way. Here, therefore, I rest; and, on this principle, I endure:

and *when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*"

There is another principle also, on which a Christian proceeds, while he endures temptation. The LOVE OF CHRIST, says the Apostle, *constraineth us.* And you will find in the text, that, when the trial of the Christian is over, *he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

Let me caution you, my Young Friends, not to stumble because you hear a sceptic treating spiritual and experimental things with contempt. Is it not natural, that one who knows nothing of a subject should reason absurdly when he talks on that subject?

But there is a *love of God shed abroad in the heart,* of which the Scripture expressly speaks. This principle is stronger than death, or there never would have been a martyr: and we know, from the history of our own country, that, when martyrs have been tried to the utmost, they have been borne up under the temptation: the love of Christ constrained them, and they died martyrs for him; for the word *martyr* signifies a *witness.* We, Brethren! are not called to die martyrs; but we are called to live martyrs: and in proportion as we endure, and bear up under the trials of life, so far we are martyrs for Jesus Christ.

Thus then is God's work on the soul of man, carried on by Faith, and Hope, and Love. And

it is unconquerable: *For*, says the Apostle, *I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature*—nor any sort of temptation, which we may be called to endure—*shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord—for, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.*

III. I proposed to consider the BLESSED EFFECT OF THUS ENDURING TEMPTATION. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

A moral philosopher might mention great advantages of enduring temptation, even in the present life: he might shew you how much evil the man escapes, who is enabled, by self-denial and serious consideration, to resist the temptations that will attack him continually; and how necessary it is for him to bear up, and not to sink when heavy afflictions surround him. He might enlarge on the peace of conscience and the self-satisfaction, the self-conquest and command, which such a man will enjoy. But the Apostle passes by all inferior considerations; and comes, at once, to the highest: for *he shall receive*, says he, *the crown of life:* beside these other advantages, *he*

shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. The conflict is but for a moment: the crown is to be eternal.

There is a *crown of ambition*, for which a man who was far too grave to make such an experiment, I mean Julius Cæsar, would even sacrifice his life. There is a *crown of vanity*, for which so eminent a person as Cicero would sacrifice his very character, that the historian of the times might represent him as the first orator in the world. There is a *crown of roses*, for which the voluptuary is willing to sacrifice every thing; and which ends, as he always finds, in a *crown of thorns*.

But it is a *crown of life*, of which the Apostle speaks. Some may say, that a Christian should not look for rewards: but God has promised rewards; and has told us, that one of his most eminent servants made a noble stand, and *endured as seeing him who is invisible: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward;* not a reward of merit, but of grace. The Apostle plainly intimates that they endured, by considering that the light affliction which lasted but for a moment, *worked out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

We, therefore, proceed on the apostolical practice, in preaching the word of God, when we apply to the hopes of men, in order to overcome their fears; and tell them to look forward to a

crown of life, that they may be faithful unto death.

In conclusion, there are two CAUTIONS, which I will mention on this subject.

You see it expressly asserted, that the man is *blessed that endureth temptation:* and, in the second verse, the Apostle says, *My brethren, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations,* or trials: consider it as a token or evidence that you are not sweeping away with the current of this wicked world, but bearing up against its oppositions. Since, therefore, this is the royal way—no cross, no crown—I would admonish you,

1. Not to STUMBLE at the dispensation:

2. Not to FEAR it, while you are cleaving to God, to give you his grace, as alone sufficient for you.

1. STUMBLE NOT at the dispensation of trial.

Say not, "Why am I thus? Why am I liable to meet with such things? Why has God permitted it?" Nay, says St. Peter, *Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.* There are great differences in the circumstances of a Christian, but there is one thing common to them all:—they are all tried: they are all brought into the school of experience. It is said of the blessed, in the VIIth chapter of the Revelation, *These are they, which came out of great tribulation:*

they were all tried: they were all tempted. The refiner does not put his gold into the furnace, because he values it less than the dross which lies on one side; but, because he values it, he puts it in, in order to purify it.

"God," says an old writer, "had one Son without sin; but never had one without sorrow, trial, and temptation:" for even Christ himself was *made perfect through suffering*—qualified as a mediator and high-priest; that he might know how to sympathize with and to succour those that are tempted, having been himself severely tried.

That the faithful people of God become soldiers, fighting under his banner; that they are made willing to endure, and to press forward to the prize; this is an evidence and seal which he sets upon them. We find our Lord, therefore, saying, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* Then—"*Feed my sheep.* Take your lot with them. Like Moses, prefer the reproach of Christ to all the offers of the world."

Whenever, then, you are called to trial and temptation, think of our Lord's question, *Simon, lovest thou me?* It is a close question put to us. Do you love Jesus Christ? Are you willing to undergo shame for him, and to fight his battles? Are you willing to bear the name of an enthusiast, of a fanatic, of a bigot, for his sake? Are you willing to bear, for him, such treatment from a deluded world? Then happy are ye, little flock!

you thus honour God, and he will honour you, by putting you in possession, after your sufferings, of his kingdom of bliss and glory. Are you willing to count the cost of religion?—for religion will cost you something, though irreligion will cost you infinitely more.

Seriously consider, therefore, that this is the royal way in which all the children of God must walk. But,

2. FEAR NOT, because you have such a path to pass; for remember that *Blessed is the man*—not that escapes, but—*that endureth temptation.*

Thou, therefore, my son, says St. Paul to Timothy, *be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus —endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ —I therefore endure all things for the elect's sake —I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.* But *it is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him:* but, *if we deny him, he also will deny us.*

Fear not, while in God's hand. He brought his people to the Red Sea: he subjected them there to a severe trial: their way seemed ironed up, their enemies close behind them, and a gloomy prospect before; but his grace was sufficient for them: he spake, and opened a path through the waters. He had taught his servant Jehosaphat to say, when a multitude of enemies came against

him, *O our God—we have no might against this great company—but our eyes are upon thee!*

Often, indeed, will evil thoughts harass us: often would the enemy of our souls sink us into despair, were we not supported by an almighty arm: often shall we have to bear shocks so repugnant to our feelings, that we shall be ready to call in question, whether we are Christians. But, let us ever remember, that *there hath no temptation taken us, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape.* We can no more prevent these things happening to us, than we can prevent the revel in the streets, that disturbs us and our families at night.

If you say, then, "How shall I endure in the midst of these trials?"—I answer, "Not by your being enabled to mitigate your sufferings; but by lying under the pressure, till it please God to make it lighter. St. Paul was still to endure, but the grace of God was promised under his burden.

One of the English Martyrs was so alarmed at the thoughts of his suffering on the morrow in the midst of a fire, that it seemed to him an impossibility that he should go through the conflict; and, in order to try the experiment, he put his finger into the flame of the candle, but found he could not endure it: and, no wonder! for that was not his call: his dispensation did not require

that he should voluntarily bring himself into pain, and much less that he should do it in a spirit of unbelief. But, though he could not endure, in his own strength, even his finger in the flame: yet, the next day, he could give up, in the strength of God, his whole body to the fire; and, with heroical constancy and christian fortitude, could cheerfully resign his life in the flames: for, *as our day is, so shall our strength be.*

In the world, we are taught to expect tribulation and temptation from every quarter: though it will be our Christian duty, as well as prudence, to avoid them whenever we can. Let us beware of imitating the martyr, in attempting to thrust our finger into the flame: but, to whatever degree of suffering God calls us, it is enough that he is faithful to his promise, and will perform it.

May this be verified in the experience of us all!

SERMON XXIX.

PATIENCE THE CHILD OF FAITH, AND PARENT OF SUCCESS.

JAMES v. 7, 8.

Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord: behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient: stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

THERE is a striking difference between Heathen and Christian virtues. The Heathen endeavoured to overcome by Silence, by Courage, by Fortitude, and often by Revenge: the Christian looks for victory by Faith and Patience; by looking at that which is invisible to an eye of sense; by becoming *a follower of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.* In this way *he* hopes to succeed; and, in this way, he will succeed, because it is God's way.

The Christian must rise, where every man beside must fall. We find, therefore, the Apostle saying, in the beginning of this chapter, *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries, that shall come upon you. You* must fall. A time is coming, when your riches shall profit you nothing.

The Christian shall take his riches with him: he cannot be robbed of his riches; for they are spiritual and durable, and death cannot touch them.

But, says the Apostle, YOUR *riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten:* your *gold and silver is cankered.* Nor is that the worst part of your case: *the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold! the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them, which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton: ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you.*

What!—Is the earth given into the hands of these wicked men?—Is the just man but as a sheep prepared for the slaughter?—It may be so—It may be so for a day: but, says the Apostle, *Be patient, therefore, Brethren! unto the coming of the Lord: suffer, with long patience,* as it reads in the margin. Leave the matter to God. It is enough that he has promised to be your friend. It is enough for you to know, that, as the husbandman waiteth for the fruits of the harvest until he receives them, so must you wait for your harvest. Your harvest draweth nigh, when you shall reap the fruit of your faith: therefore be

patient: establish your hearts: *for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

From this Scripture, I shall discourse on the following Proposition:

CHRISTIAN PATIENCE IS THE CHILD OF FAITH AND THE PARENT OF SUCCESS.

I. CHRISTIAN PATIENCE IS THE CHILD OF FAITH.

The Christian is not an insensible, thoughtless, or enthusiastic character. He has an object before him—*the coming of the Lord.* He first believes, then he waits.

He considers, first, that his forefathers in the faith waited a long time for the coming of Christ according to the flesh. *Abraham rejoiced,* Christ said, *to see my day: and he saw it* by faith, long before Christ came; he satisfied himself that God could not lie, and this established his heart.

Now one of the spiritual children of Abraham, walking in the faith of his father, considers that this promise has been fulfilled—that *the desire of all nations* has appeared, according to the promise, and exactly at the predicted time.

He says, therefore, to himself, "When he came, what has he left on record concerning his coming again, and the consequences of that second coming?—He said, that all nations shall be gathered before him; that he will separate them one from

another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and that he will set the sheep on his right-hand, but the goats on his left: that he will order his angels to gather up the tares and burn them, but to lodge the wheat safely in his garner.

"What did he do, when he came?—He proved that he was the Faithful, the Just, the True, and the Almighty.

"What promise, what expectation did he hold forth of his coming again?—He said, '*Be patient: follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be—I am the light of the world: he, that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* Yours is a reversion: can you trust me? Can you honour me? Can you glorify me before men? Can you wait for my coming; and take up that religion which consists of faith, and patience, and obedience? Are you one of those who are poor in spirit? then you shall certainly have the kingdom which I have promised.'"

When the Holy Spirit of God works a correspondent disposition to this proposal in the hearts of Christians, they are satisfied with the plan, with their Master, and with his wages.

What shall I say? A Christian is as a *wise virgin*, in a waiting posture. A Christian rests on a rock: "Here," says he, "will I stand! Tell me not what men say of me. Let them call me fool! Let them call me madman! I am building on a rock: I will, therefore, by faith and

patience, now establish my heart; for surely *the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*"

Patience, then, as you see, is the Child of Faith. It is not obstinacy: it is not stupidity: it is not enthusiasm: it is not the pride of the soul: but it is the Living Martyr, trusting to the word and faithfulness of his Lord; believing that, in a very little time, he shall enter into his rest, and that it shall soon be said of him, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours.*

II. But, while Patience is the Child of Faith, it is, at the same time, the PARENT OF SUCCESS.

The patient man is in the way to conquer. This is illustrated variously in this chapter.

When the HUSBANDMAN has laboured in his field and sown his seed, he cannot at once raise bread. What avails his haste? What avails his fretting? He may fret, because the frost sets in: he may fret, because there seems to him to be too much rain: but how will his fretting benefit him? Will his impatience alter the state of the ground? will it change the weather? will it forward the harvest? His impatience can do no good; but his patience can:—his trusting of God, and quieting of himself to wait for the appointed seasons, sleeping and rising, and rising and sleeping, while the corn is growing he knows not how. Thus *the*

husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain: that is, he comes into the order of God: he has patience with God: he goes on, trusting that, in God's way, he shall obtain the promised harvest. "Now, therefore," as if the Apostle had said, "Look at him. You must hope for success in the same way. Does he use means? So must you; and you must have patience, like him."

The Apostle states another case. *Take, my Brethren, the* PROPHETS, *who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience.* Consider how the world has treated the greatest and best of men—men, who have lived on purpose, as it were to befriend the world! Noah was a long time building the ark, for the safety of his house; while an ungodly world were scorning and reviling him: but he patiently worked on, and he and his house were saved. Jacob was a man of sorrows: but, when dying, he says, *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord;* plainly implying that he had not waited in vain. Look at Moses, at Jeremiah, at Daniel: take them for an example of faith and patience; and for proofs that Patience is the Parent of Success. By faith and patience they overcame the world, *with its affections and lusts;* and consider, in running over the history of the Prophets and Apostles, that they never lost

ground, till they lost their patience: if Moses failed at Massah and Meribah, it was when he had lost his patience: if Elijah, that great champion of Israel, is brought into a mean and contemptible predicament, it was when he had lost his patience; flying from the face of a woman: if we hear Jeremiah talking of being deceived,—*O Lord, thou hast deceived me*—it was when he had lost his patience. They would give God no time: they would not trust him. *Take them*, says the Apostle, *for an example. Behold! we count them happy which endure*; they trust God: like the three children walking in the fiery furnace, their bonds only are burnt, while they are safe.

St. James mentions another instance. *Ye have heard of the patience of* JOB: he was a suffering man: mark his patience: consider how *he* endured—*Though he slay me, yet will I trust him:—Ye have heard of the patience of Job; and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

All these witnesses declared, that they were only strangers upon earth, and but as pilgrims travelling to a better country; that they could trust their Master; that they knew in whom they believed, and that he was able to keep what they had committed to him; and that their inheritance was a reversion.

Now consider *the end of the Lord;* and see in every case, if true Christian Patience was not the

Child of their Faith, and the Parent of their Success.

III. In conclusion, we shall make a few REMARKS from this subject.

1. We here see the GROUND on which the Apostle says, *Be patient.*

Let Passion have its good things now, and it will soon be in rags: let passion climb the highest step, it will only fall the sooner: but be you patient, and by faith and patience, be you *followers of them, who, through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

Let me exhort you, Brethren! to consider the line marked out by your Master. When tempted to impatience, ask yourselves, what impatience will effect for the husbandman. It may vex and harass him; but it will not make anything grow. Saul would not wait for the Lord: he would sacrifice at his own time, and in his own way, and would go to a witch for advice, because he was impatient; but remember, he had no success. David learnt a very different lesson: when *the people spake of stoning him* at Ziklag, he *encouraged himself in the Lord his God:* as though he had said, "God knoweth how to deliver me! Here I stand, and will establish my heart. *As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so mine eyes wait upon thee, O Lord my God, until*

thou have mercy upon me." My Dear Hearers, you must have learnt, in the course of your experience, both in and out of religion, that an impatient spirit mars every thing with which it is concerned.

Are we to wait, then, for *the early and the latter rain?*—let us sow, therefore, though we sow weeping. Let us rest assured, that, while we thus trust him, his work is going safely on. Joseph waited God's time; and he brought him out of the prison, and made him lord of Egypt. Job endured many reproaches; but, says he, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth*, and that I shall one day *see him for myself.*"

The man, who looked at Job, if he rightly understood the case, might have said, "That man is mistaken by his friends. He has a dark night and a stormy path to walk in; yet he is so right in saying, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*, he is so right in patiently waiting for the coming of his Lord, that he shall find, that, in God's time, he will draw nigh to him, and plead his cause."

The man, who marked Haman swelling with rage, and discontented and wretched till he had procured the death of Mordecai; and, at the same time, had seen Mordecai looking to God for deliverance, and urging Esther and his friends to prayer:—the man, who marked these things, might, not see the way by which God would

deliver his servants; but he shall soon see the wheels of his providence in motion. The king shall not be able to sleep: his instruments of music shall not sooth him: till, by step after step, Mordecai is exalted to the post of honour, and Haman hanged upon his own gallows.

Be patient, therefore, Brethren. Establish your hearts.

2. We observe, that the way to walk steadily and stedfastly, is, TO KEEP THE GRAND OBJECT BEFORE US—*the coming of the Lord.*

It would be well for us, if we could every morning say to ourselves when we awake, "I am one day nearer to *the coming of the Lord:* and, perhaps, before I rise again, I may be called to stand in his presence!" This is the great secret of a Christian—to have Christ the Judge present in the conscience—*Christ in us, the hope of glory*—Christ in us, *the way, the truth, and the life:* to see him, by faith, coming on his *great white throne* in the heavens, to be the *judge both of quick and dead.*

The Carnal Professor cannot wait: the Antinomian Professor cannot wait, nor work, nor bear the cross: the Formalist cannot wait, nor submit to a life of faith: the Stony-Ground Hearer cannot wait, nor endure the burning sun of temptation: the Worldly-Wise Man cannot wait, nor understand this life of faith and patience.

If you are one of these characters, it is no wonder that you do not succeed; but, if you are living branches of the living vine, you will be willing to wait for Christ's coming—you will be willing to wait for his explanation of all your trials and temptations—you will ask, "How will he pronounce in that day?" for it is of no avail what man thinks: in that day, the Judge himself will hold the scales; and many, who now make a bold profession, will then be found wanting.

3. Let no man, however, be discouraged: but, since the Apostle introduces here a cloud of witnesses, LET US ENDEAVOUR TO RUN WITH PATIENCE THE RACE SET BEFORE US.

The traveller sets forward on his journey: he means to attain a certain end: he has some great concerns to settle; perhaps an estate to receive, of which he is thinking day and night. Whatever be the weather, however dark the clouds, however threatening the face of the sky, this man will say, "I must press forward, and that continually, if I would attain my end!"

He, who sets this race before us, says, *So run, that ye may obtain.* He knows that we are soon disheartened; and, therefore, he points us to *the footsteps of the flock!* Others have travelled before us: yea, and in much worse weather, than we have to encounter; and loaded with heavier burdens, *enduring a great fight of afflictions.* You

may say, therefore, "I have a dreary path; but I must travel on with patience. I suffer; but I suffer with a *cloud of witnesses.* I must be supported as they were. I must live upon promises. I must trust that word, which cannot be broken; as they did, who have now finished their course with joy."

Brethren! is it thus with you?—Then shall you *behold the king in his beauty.* You shall *see the land that is afar off*, and have every tear wiped from your eye. You shall reap the harvest, as well as *sow in tears.* The corn, that is to produce bread, is growing through the storm, through many a blustering and tempestuous night, through many a bitter blast: but, *Be patient, Brethren. To them, who, by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality—eternal life* belongs.

In a word, whoever is taught of God, sees the success that attends walking in the path of patience, and has encouragement in his soul to believe that in the end it shall be well with him: and, whenever he sees a suffering Christian, hanging on the word; taking hold of his Master, and saying, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;* he knows that every such man has not only a spiritual perception, but a moral disposition: "There is the man," he will say, "who has *with him the secret of the Lord!* That man has the rock under his feet! That man shall weather the storm!"

May the Holy Spirit, therefore, give you see, that Patience is the Child of Faith and t Parent of Success: for surely, *the day of* t *Lord draweth nigh.* And, in that day, may y and I meet at the right-hand of Christ: as w nesses that the Word of our God is Truth, a endureth for ever!

SERMON XXX.

A TRANSIENT WORLD AND ABIDING CHRISTIAN.

Preached on the last Day of the Year.

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1 JOHN ii. 17.

The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he, that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.

A THOROUGH and practical acquaintance with things, is important to us in proportion to the interest which we have in them. Were any one able to give us a minute account of the planet Jupiter, it might amuse our curiosity, but could be of no material advantage; for what have *we* to do with the planet Jupiter? But, if any one come as a teacher from God—an infallible guide—and give me an account of that with which I have so much to do—an account of this world; and, if that account were accurate, and, at the same time, alarming; and yet he were to tell me how I might escape the evil—this is a messenger of a thousand! I am on board a vessel: it is of great importance to me to know in what state that vessel is: one tells me, not only that the vessel shall be dashed in pieces, but how I may escape:—such a friend,

and in such a manner, speaks to us to-night—and says, *The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he, that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.*

This subject seems particularly suited to us, now in the evening of the last day of this year. You will say, perhaps, "It has passed like a dream!" It has: and your whole life, when you reach its concluding point, and look back on it, will appear a dream: but here is an account of the World itself—IT *passeth away.*

Let us endeavour,

1. To enter into the MEANING of the Apostle in these words:

2. To make a PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT of them to our own hearts.

I. We will consider the MEANING of the Apostle.

The world passeth away. What is to be understood by the *world* here? It is plain that the Apostle principally means that part of the world, which men are most apt to covet and build on: for, in the verse preceding the text, he says, *All, that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.* Take these things away from the natural man, and you have left him nothing! you have taken away his all! And what is his all?—

It is *the world*, says the Apostle:—The world—not as God made it, but as sin hath made it.

And this *world*, says the Apostle, *passeth away. That, which has been, is that, which shall be; and there is nothing new under the sun.* The world is but like a theatre, in which the scenes are shifted every moment: it *passeth away: the pageant of this world passeth by!* Look at it: it is gone! Like a man dreaming of fine scenes—he awakes! and they are all gone! When a man comes to die, the whole world will thus appear: whatever he may have seen, it is now passed: all the splendour and bustle, in which he has been engaged, is now passed; and it has been nothing! "*What shall the man do,*" says Solomon, "*that cometh after the king?* and I have found the whole world to be vanity." Depend on it, the man, who has made the trial, will say, "It is passed by! I have seen it, and it was all *vanity and vexation of spirit.*" It is just as the year, that is now departing. It has passed before our eyes like a dream. We recollect this, and that, and the other circumstance: but now they are gone by! Yea, and the world itself is going! And not only the world, but its lusts and its desires are passing away: they shall soon fail; so that the Christian shall be obliged to say, "*I loathe it: I would not live always. Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.* There has been so much disquiet in my family, so much trouble among my children, so

many disappointments, so much mortification, so many combats with my heart, so much difficulty even to get on thus far—that, if it does but please God to bring me to a better world, no matter how soon!"

"Truly," says one, "this is a melancholy picture! You are hanging the world in mourning!"

Brethren! this is not *my* account. Were it so, perhaps you might say I had been crossed and disappointed in the world, and had quarrelled with it. It is of no moment what account any man gives of the world: let us ask, What account does God give of it? Now He tells us, that it *passeth away, with the lusts thereof:* he tells us, that the vessel will soon become a wreck: and his account will always tally with experience, for the book of his Word ever agrees with the book of his Providence. Though, however, this is a distressing, mortifying, and melancholy estimate of that world on which the carnal heart is fixed, let the carnal man begin to suspect it to be true. It is well for the mariner, who is in a sinking ship, to know that he is so. "The world in my heart," says a sound divine, "is a worse disorder than was ever brought to Christ in the flesh for cure:" and those, who have triumphed most in it, have found it to be so.

But we ought never to stop here: much less ought we to object to Christianity, as presenting only a melancholy prospect. God tells us, indeed,

what will not bear us up: he tells us what will deceive us: he tells us where there is no rest for our foot; but at the same time, he tells us where that rest may be found. A melancholy cynic of a philosopher may give us his estimate of the world: he may tell us that it presents a melancholy picture; because he knows of nothing better. But tell a Christian Minister that the world must pass away: "It is true," he will say. Tell him that its lusts must pass away—its pleasures, its desires, its amusements: "That is true too: yet there is a man, who shall not pass away, but abide for ever!"

Who is that man? The account given of him in the text, is, that *he doeth the will of God.*

I would remark here, that, the godly man is variously described in Scripture. Sometimes he is called a just man; sometimes, a faithful man; sometimes, a merciful man; a man, who is pure in heart; a believer in God; a man of hope; a man, that doeth the will of God freely. These are only different names and descriptions of one particular character. Rest not, therefore, on one description, lest you should mistake. They are only features: take the whole countenance.

This man is said *to do* the will of God. For instance—is it the will of God for perishing sinners *to believe on him whom God hath sent?* "God forbid," says this man, "that I should *reject the counsel of God against myself?* Has my Master

and Saviour said, that it is his will that the Spirit should dwell in me, and that I should be made a habitation of God through the Spirit; and has he bid me to pray for the Spirit? then let me go and ask for it freely: not that I can deserve this gift, but I can ask for it as he has commanded me. Has he enjoined me to sacrifice no longer to my lusts? O Lord! sanctify me through thy truth! separate me from the world; from my evil habits and my evil companions: that I may shew forth thy praise; that I may do thy will!" *He, that doeth the will of God,* doth it thus from the heart because he loves God, and is united to him by his Spirit. Is the will of God revealed as a practical will?—Is he charged no longer to spend his money on that which is not bread?—and to hear that his soul may live?—he is found choosing that which God hath chosen: and refusing that, which God refuseth.

The Bible is a system of truths, doctrinal and practical: and this man agrees in heart with the doctrinal, and guides his actions by the practical because *the love of God is shed abroad in his heart.* His whole desire is *to do* the will of God. He is a branch engrafted into the true and living vine and is here described by the Holy Ghost himself as a man *doing the will of God.*

It may be asked, perhaps, how it can be said that he *abideth for ever.* "*The world passeth away:* does not he? *The wicked is driven away*

is not he? Are not both removed to one place—the grave!" Doubtless: but there is an important sense, in which, while *the world passeth away*, the man *that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

For instance: you say that he passes away at death; but would you oppose that to his abiding for ever? I will allow that *the wicked is driven away*, but not this man. It is ruin to the wicked: it is *the second death* to him: and, therefore wretched sinners have invented Eternal Sleep as their only hope. But it is this man's blessing and privilege, that death shall not bring destruction to him. If a miserable prisoner were taken out of his dungeon to a palace, in order to receive a kingdom, you would not say that he ceases to be a man! you would not say that he discontinues to abide! you would say, "Nothing has happened to him, but an advantageous change in his manner of living." So I say of this man, "Nothing has happened in death to injure *him?* Nothing has happened but a glorious change in his manner of living! Here he has lived a life of sorrow, sickness, pain, and temptation; *fighting the good fight of faith;* and striving against the stream of the world. He has lived here *by faith;* and *there* he lives *by sight.* Where he now is, sorrow and sighing are taken away; and he is crowned with glory, immortality, and life eternal."

Notice the word *abideth.* It is not said *he*

shall abide. He *remains* in the posession of every good which he ever enjoyed. Was there any thing good in his family:—any walking there with him in faith and love?—he abideth with them, and shall be with them for ever. Had he any friend with whom *he took sweet counsel, and walked together to the house of God in company?*—he shall abide in full fruition of that friendship. That is the only friendship worthy of the name! That is friendship eternal! Had he the anchor of Hope, to cast out in a storm?—If he loses his anchor, it is that he may enter on the full enjoyment of that for which he hoped. Had he union with Christ?—he abideth in full possession of it there! Death will change his state, but not his object. All his gold, all his jewels, he carries with him: he abideth in the full possession of them; while he himself enters into that *eternal weight of glory*, which the eye never saw, the ear never heard, nor did it ever enter into the heart to conceive.

The world passeth away, therefore, *with the lusts thereof.* It is not our hope: it is not our resting-place: never let us make it such. But, while these things pass away, there is something which abideth;—faith, hope, and love: not perfect, indeed, here; but they carry us on to a state of maturity in a better world.

II. Having shewn you the Sense of the Text, let me now bring before you some REMARKS on this subject.

1. We may hence learn, that which was suggested by wise men of old—the KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES.

"Man! know thyself." This was a celebrated aphorism of antiquity; but it had no just meaning: it wanted the counsel of God. But this text teaches us the true knowledge of ourselves. It teaches us what our earthly tabernacle is; that it is coming down. It tells us what our lusts are; that they are passing away. It admonishes us, that men of the world are beguiled; that they are setting their hearts on that which is perishing.

2. We may learn, that TO DO THE WILL OF GOD IS A PROFITABLE SERVICE.

God assures us, that *nothing shall harm us, if we be followers of that which is good.* He promises that we shall have persevering grace: *I will write my laws in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.*

We may feel, then, the years pass away, death at hand, the body decay, another large portion of our lives cut off; but we may add, "So be it! No one in earth or hell can touch my portion! God has promised that I shall abide for ever! What have I to do with dying? I am an immortal; and my God has promised that I shall flourish to immortality." Let us cry, then, *Remember, O Lord, the Word, upon which thou hast caused thy servant to hope!* Let us remember, also, that Jesus *is the resurrection and the life.* This is knowing to

purpose: this is blessed, comforting, and sanctifying knowledge.

3. Here we may learn TO KNOW THE WORLD.

We hear great boasting of "knowing the world." Every stripling will look his father in the face, and tell him he wishes "to know the world;" and he will plunge into all the miseries of life—"to know the world!"

Happy only the man, who knows the world by knowing his God, his Bible, and Himself: he shall know the world to purpose. The Philosopher sees the world passing away; but he sees it with a pang: he sees it with regret: there is so much taken from his happiness: "I lose my eyes, my teeth, my hearing, my health, my vigour:" and he grows peevish and fretful. But the Christian sees it pass with a calm and solid satisfaction: "Here," says he, "I see a dying world passing away; but my Lord has told me that it passeth away: Yet *I faint not;* for *though my outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.* I have a *house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* I am waiting for this abode. I am not disappointed to hear that life is but a *hand-breadth:* I knew it. You tell me that my tabernacle is to be taken down: I knew that I should be crushed before the moth."

The most illiterate Christian has a practical knowledge of these things. He sees a bankrupt world in such a light, that he will not trust it

He is become an humble believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, He has read the history of Balak and Nebuchadnezzar, of Belshazzar and of Dives; and he has turned it to profit. And now he says, "*O Lord, what wait I for? Truly my hope is in thee!* not in a dream; not in a shadow; not in a pageant! Oh, help me to repel the fiery darts with which I am assaulted. Help me to count thy favour better than life itself."

Let us learn thus to know the world. All other knowledge is splendid ignorance.

4. We may learn TO KNOW THE GOSPEL.

The Gospel is a foundation for a man to set his foot on, while the world is passing away from under him. Tell the Christian that there is no hope in nature—"God," says he, "never intended there should be. He never intended this world to stand: and, if there were nothing else to destroy it, sin would effect its ruin. But there is a foundation, that standeth sure; and he, who builds on that foundation, shall stand for ever."

The *Master-builder* determined to lay no other foundation: and when we have truly built on that, we may bid defiance to passing worlds, mouldering bodies, and all the ravages of time. While left in the world, walking according to God's will and in his way, you will be taken into his family; for *Whoso*, said the Saviour, *doeth the will of my Father, the same is my brother and sister*

and mother: and, therefore, shall dwell with him for ever.

Brethren! have you begun to build against every approaching storm? The foolish man's house, however fairly erected, was built on sand, and must come down. If you are, indeed, building on Christ, the winds may blow and the waves may rise, but you are secure. Oh, that we may lay it effectually to heart, that, while days pass away and our friends are dying around us, we ourselves shall soon be called to die! Oh, that we may learn to build on the Rock of Ages! The world is departing, and opportunities are passing away. Many say, "How swift has this departing year fled!" True—it has; but has the swiftness of its flight brought you to think for yourselves, on what you are to stand, that you may stand for ever? *I beseech you, Dearly beloved, as strangers and pilgrims* drawing nearer and nearer to your eternal home, to recollect, that *now is the accepted time,* that *this* is *the day of salvation.*

May God, of his infinite mercy, make it such to every one of us, for Jesus Christ's sake!

SERMON XXXI.

LOSS OF FIRST LOVE.

REV. ii. 4.

Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

WHEN Christ left the world, in respect of his bodily presence, he left this promise with his disciples: *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;* and he gave proof that his promise might be depended on: and, not only so, but he permitted them to see the performance of it.

When a furious persecutor, like Saul of Tarsus, was destroying the Church, had he known of this promise, he would have diregarded and despised it, yet Christ had not forgotten it; and therefore arrests him on his way: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*

When St. John was banished to Patmos, and, as it is said by some historians, made a slave in the mines there, had Christ then forgotten this promise? No! we have here its fulfilment. He visits, and under a glorious appearance, his servant in Patmos. The Apostle sees his Master walking among the golden candlesticks, and hears him bid him write the things which he had seen, and

which should be hereafter. In thus visiting him, Christ proved that he still lived, and that he lived for the benefit of his Church; and he sent by him messages to different Churches. We have now to consider a part of the message which he sent to one of these Churches: *Unto the angel*, or principal minister, *of the Church of Ephesus, write: These things, saith he, that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience; and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne; and hast patience; and for my Name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.* These are high commendations: but, in the text, he says, *Nevertheless,——nevertheless—I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love:* thou art now in a state of decay.

I shall consider, concerning this decay in religion.

1. Its NATURE.
2. Its DANGER.
3. Its SYMPTOMS.
4. Its REMEDY.

I. We are to consider the NATURE of decay in religion.

You are to distinguish here, Brethren, between

a Church decaying, and a Church that is dead. This Church was not dead. A Church is mentioned, in the beginning of the third chapter, that was dead: *Unto the angel of the Church in Sardis write, These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.* A Church may be alive, as to its ordinances and doctrines; and yet have *left its first love.* It may hold the truth: it may have the Gospel in the form of it; and in the power of it too, in a certain degree, so as not to be dead: and yet—what we may call the soul of religion—the spirituality, the love, the zeal, the fervor, which it once had, may be gone.

There is not one of us, who does not understand this in natural things. You know what it is to be sick, when you are not dead. You know what it is to have a friend sick, and to feel for him; to be alarmed and distressed, when he is not dead: but you are alarmed, because your friend is sick; and because you know that he must die, if he does not mend. You would not say of bad wine, "It is not wine:" but, "It is not good wine: it has not a good flavour." So, of fruit, you would not say, "It is not an apricot, or a peach:" but, "It is not a fine one: it has lost its flavour." And so, of a Church, you cannot say, "It does not hold the truth:" you cannot say, "It is dead:" but, "There are evident signs of decay: it has lost its first love."

And, my Dear Friends, let us consider, also, that he, who searches the heart, knows perfectly our particular cases. He may justly reprove us, when man may have nothing wherewith to reproach us. "What charge can you bring against my Christian profession?"—None, perhaps: yet the Lord Jesus Christ may be able to say, *Thou hast left thy first love*—thy zeal—thy fervency.

Our Lord acknowledges that there was life in this Church. "*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil;* and *thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience: and, for my name's sake, hast laboured, and hast not fainted.* Yet, notwithstanding this, he, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men, sees that the spirit, the life, the power, the unction—that which may be called the first love in thee—is gone: there is a coldness, a comparative indifference, a want of spirituality, a want of tenderness of conscience. Thou dost not feel toward me, as thou once didst. Thou dost not feel toward my people, as thou once didst. Thou art not jealous for my cause and interest, as thou once wast."

A good man may say, "I know not what is the matter: but things are not with me as they once were." But, my Dear Hearers, long before good men are alarmed, Jesus Christ saw the evil: he

marked a worm at the root, eating out the spirit and energy of their profession. When we have still many good things, yet he may have somewhat against us.

II. Let us consider the DANGER of this state of religious decay.

The most fatal ruins, are frequently not those which come suddenly; but those which come progressively—by little and little—from step to step. There is not a more fatal disease than a consumption: yet the consumptive patient is frequently so deceived respecting his disorder, because he is not in violent pain, and the progress of his disease is slow, that you can scarcely persuade him of his danger: consumptive persons will plan and contrive for months and years to come, when they have not a week to live! Decay in religion is of this nature: it is a spiritual consumption. If a house receive a shock from a stroke of lightning, it may still be sound in the main, and may not require to be pulled down: but if a house begin to decay at the foundation, there is little hope but it must come down.

Brethren! I say these things to warn you. In conducting our ministry, we must treat on its various topics: at one time we instruct, at another encourage, and at a third warn. I would now put you on your guard, and I would put myself on my guard, because we are in danger.

III. Since there is such Danger in religious decay, let us enquire what are the SIGNS of it. How shall we know as a Church, and how shall I know individually, when decay is coming upon us, so as to escape it?

Here it is impossible for me to enter into a full view of its symptoms: I can give but a few of those signs, whereby the loss of first love may be known. And what I shall say on this point, I shall say both from observation of my own heart, and from observation in my ministry.

1. Though a man in his first love, his first zeal, first spirit and savour, will not rest solely in his knowledge of divine truth; yet he will *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints:* because he knows, that, by hearing and receiving the truths and principles of the Gospel, he has been enabled to *escape the corruptions that are in the world through lust.* But, when he leaves his first love, you will find him RESTING IN and BUILDING ON HIS KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTHS: whether a soul-transforming power accompanies them is another matter: he rests in his knowledge of them. Or he is satisfied, perhaps, with a regular walk; with keeping the company to which he has been accustomed, and talking the same language which he used to talk: while he may be cold as to the design and principle of the Christian walk and conversation. He will contend earnestly for the forms and particular opinions of the party to

which he is united; but he is cold as to growing up into Christ Jesus in all things, and glorifying God in the world, and walking through it as Christ did, and overcoming it by a living faith.

2. The man, who has left his first love, is COLD IN SPIRITUAL, AND WARM IN SECULAR PURSUITS. Before, his worldly affairs were subordinate: he did his business, and followed his profession as his duty: now his whole heart is occupied therein.

3. HE BEGINS TO BE VERY SUSCEPTIBLE OF TAKING OFFENCE. He cannot meet the servants of God as he used to do. He cannot now get over little stumbling-blocks, which he finds in his way. He searches for plausible reasons for withdrawing himself from the servants of God. There is *a mote in his brother's eye;* when alas! he sees not the *beam that is in his own.* He shrinks back now from every difficulty. Every little thing now hurts him. Why is all this?—he has left his first love. You will find him accommodating himself to the world; doing what he once could not do; and associating with those with whom he once could not bear to associate. He is impatient, also, of reproof. Formerly his language was, *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me,* and point out any symptoms of decay: to a friend or to his minister he would say, "If you see me do anything wrong, pray speak to me: I charge you to be faithful: be not afraid to speak to me: tell

me my error; for I am seeking the truth, and seeking to glorify God by a consistent profession of it." But now—tell him of an error, or of a danger which you perceive in his practice, he may perhaps preserve his temper, but you will soon find him grow shy of you: he has left his first love, and he does not choose to be reproved.

4. But there is a sign still more awful, and more significant of that death which is coming on such a soul: and that is, where a man, who once had the life and love of religion, can SPORT WITH THE CHURCH'S WOUNDS. Do you understand me?—Where he can join the laugh of the profane at the Church of Christ, because of the weakness and folly that may be discerned in its Ministers or Professors; where he can be willing to listen to their objections, and support them, and thereby wound and injure the cause of Christ. He stumbles at weak things. *Who is weak*, says St. Paul, *and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I am not offended?* I would heal the wounds: I would cover them with charity: *Charity covereth a multitude of sins.*

Brethren! these are some of the Signs of religious decay. Where these are found, depend on it that Satan, though not making an open assault is yet secretly undermining the soul. "*Remember therefore*," says our Lord, "*from whence thou a fallen.* If you slight your privileges, rememb that I will not suffer my Gospel to be trifled wit

I will not suffer my inestimable blessings to be slighted: *I will come, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place.*" Here is our danger. The danger of a Church is not from cruel tyrants, or a burning fiery furnace: the danger of a Church is, when Jesus Christ looks on, and says, *I have somewhat against thee;* and when he adds, *I will come, and remove thy candlestick out of its place.* This is the danger of a Church: and, therefore, above all things, let us fear decay, and watch against it, lest we lose our light and our privileges.

IV. Let me now speak a word on the REMEDY which Christ suggests.

"Is it so, that *I have somewhat against thee?*" it is as though he had said: "then I will give thee counsel. Thou art not dead. *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear* error. I am a witness for thee. Still, because *as many as I love I rebuke and chasten,* I tell thee that thy first love is gone. I counsel thee to remember—remember that it is gone!"

This is one part of our remedy—RECOLLECTION.

"To know ourselves diseas'd is half our cure."

There is quackery in diseases of the soul, as well as in those of the body: and the great encouragement to listen to it is, that it promises great things; an easier and a shorter mode of cure; so beguiling the simple. And we see at this day, that, when a decay cannot be denied in a person or in

a Church, there comes in the spiritual quackery of some new-fangled doctrine—some new mode of worship—some new form of church government—some new interpretation of Scripture—and this is to heal a sin-sick soul!—the wounds, which Christ alone can heal by his Word and Spirit, are to be healed by such pretended nostrums! and yet simple souls are so caught by the marvellous, that they think every point must be carried because the man promises such great things!

"But I only," says the Great Physician, "I only can counsel thee to purpose. I only can cure thee. I tell thee, therefore, to *remember from whence thou art fallen. Remember the kindness of thy youth—the love of thine espousals; when thou wentest after me into the wilderness—Remember from whence thou art fallen.* Remember thy backslidings from me: lament over them: confess them before me; and look to God to enable thee to take thy steps with more firmness, and to offer up thy prayers with more spirituality, and to *do the first works* more cordially. Make thou the kingdom of God and his righteousness thy first object. I tell thee to remember that this is so necessary, that, if there be not remembrance and repentance, the decay will go on till you get into such a state, that *I will come, and remove thy candlestick out of its place.*"

Take the counsel, which Christ gives to another Church in decay: *Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve,*

that thou mayest see: buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear: and, *as ye* first *received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.* Recollect how you began. It was better with thee then, than now. Remember the simplicity of thy first steps. Remember the unity of thy heart at that time: though thou didst not know so much then as now, yet thy first love was the best love.

CHRIST, therefore, is our remedy, Brethren, for spiritual decay. Conceal not, I pray you, your case from him; for he wholly comprehends the disease, and can completely instruct us in the cure. The Great High Priest means our cure: therefore he does not trifle with the case. May God grant that we may not trifle with it! He counsels us to come to him for recovery; and there is no cure that he cannot effect, if thou returnest to him. He is Almighty and will fulfil all that he hath promised; and, in returning to him, thou shalt be healed.

I shall conclude with a word of ADMONITION.

And the Admonition is that, which Christ himself makes use of in the seventh verse:—*He, that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

Is there an inquiring heart before me? A man honest to his convictions—who would save his soul—who would not have his soul and body made the sport and prey of fiends—sunk into that pit whence there is no redemption?—Does he come to hear the counsel of God? Hath he an ear to hear?—then *let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches:* let him hear what Christ saith; for it is Christ that speaks by me. I am a worthless earthen vessel; but I speak the words of Christ: therefore refuse not his word: refuse not him that says, *I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

Let us every one ask, "What does conscience say to this charge? Have *we* left our first love?" Then has Christ somewhat against *us! He is of one mind, and who can turn him?* What does he say in the second chapter of Jeremiah? *Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord: What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?* Is there any charge against me, O perverse generation? *Have I been a wilderness to Israel?*

This is the appeal of God to Israel. Who then among us will be satisfied with saying, "No man can bring a charge against me?" Who would be satisfied with this? for, how many things are there in the decay of the soul, which the most pene-

trating human eye can never discover! What!—man!—a blind creature, mistaking in every step!—am I to be satisfied because *he* can bring no charge against me? What would it avail, if the whole world were to join to acquit me, while Jesus says, "*I have somewhat against thee?* I, who search the heart and try the reins, see there is a decay: and I tell thee, because I love thee; and would stop the decay by calling thee to recollection and to repentance."

Is not this exactly your conduct toward your children, when you see them taking a wrong course? Do not you talk to them again and again? And why do you this? You do not take so much pains with other children. You give *them* advice: but you repeat it again and again to your own children, because you love them better than you do the children of others.

Remember, then, the message of Christ, which you have now heard: and recollect, that he sits as a refiner, and will thoroughly purify his children. I entreat you, therefore, Brethren, to seek him, that he may not have to charge you with this also: "I warned thee of thy decay, and thou neglectedst my warning."

But hear Christ's Encouragements, as well as his warnings:—*To him, that overcometh, will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* "What!" as if he had said, "it is a small thing, that I give unto my

people not as the world giveth, that I mock them not as the world doth, nor offer them a momentary gratification like that of the world! *I will give to him, that overcometh, to eat of the Tree of Life:* he shall derive from me *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:* he shall *sit with me at my table in my kingdom.*" What hath the sensualist or the hypocrite to hope for, compared with this? Oh, reflect for a moment, *ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*

My Dear Hearers, the moment we set out as Christians, we profess to be armed men—taking unto us the whole armour of God. Let us *run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus:* and, when we meet difficult and rugged road, let us remember the promise—*To him, that overcometh, will I give to eat of the Tree of Life.* "By the help of God, then," let each of us say, "I will endeavour to look up, like Jacob, and see a ladder reaching from heaven to earth, that I may climb from earth to heaven: I will endeavour to climb this ladder, taking step by step; and, if I can take but one step this month or this year, I will remember that it is a step toward glory, honour and immortality."

May God, of his infinite mercy, enable every one of us to rise from earth, and to reach that blessed world!

SERMON XXXII.

SPECIAL SUPPORT IN SUFFERING.

REVELATION i. 17.

And when I saw Him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right-hand upon me, saying unto me, fear not: I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

BEFORE Christ left the world, he warned his disciples, that, in *that* world, they should have tribulation; *but, be of good cheer*, he said, *for I have overcome the world*, and *I will not leave you comfortless* in it. But he did more than encourage them by words: for he appeared unto Stephen, while his enemies were stoning him: he arrested Paul, when he was persecuting: and he visited John, when he was suffering in exile, and probably in slavery. *I John*, says the Apostle, *who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day; and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am*

Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the Seven Churches which are in Asia.

From these words I shall discourse ON THE SPECIAL SUPPORT, WHICH A CHRISTIAN MAY EXPECT, IN HIS SUFFERINGS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

But who is the Christian? I have often endeavoured in this pulpit to answer the question: but it cannot be too often considered; for, "If I am not a Christian," should every man say, "I am *dead in trespasses and sins*—I am *in darkness even until now*—I am an enemy to God—I am a child of the devil: and, as God liveth, and as my soul liveth, *there is but a step between me and death* eternal." What an important question then is it, "Am I a Christian?"

A Christian is a man convinced by the word and Spirit of God, that he has been in the lost state just described; and that, till God awaken him to see and to feel and to confess his condition, and to take hold of the mercy revealed in Christ, he was perishing even as others—in ignorance—in enmity—in presumption—and, perhaps, even with *the form of Godliness, denying the power thereof.*

Such a man is not now to be told that Christianity is only a change of opinion. He knows that he was blind, and now sees: he knows that he was dead in sin, and now lives by the faith of

the Son of God: he knows that he was without hope, and without God in the world: and he now knows, too, that he has a hope full of immortality, built upon nothing less firm than the truth and character of God. Old views, old idols are passed away: *behold, all things are become new;* for *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*

Consider the Christian as a sufferer. To this man, indeed, are given many great and precious promises; but not one that he shall not suffer tribulation here. He is rather admonished, that, in the world, he *shall* have tribulation: though, in Christ, he shall have peace. He may, at times, be so overwhelmed with views of himself, or with views of his God and the path in which he leads him, as to be ready, like the Apostle, to fall down dead at his feet. This is a matter of experience. The violent assaults of temptation—the black suggestions of the Evil One—the frightful insinuations of unbelief—the sometimes total deadness and depravity of the heart—force a bitter cry of *Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!*

The holiness of God—His hatred of sin—His former favours—His book of remembrance—His judgment-seat—His final sentence, are so impressed on the conscience of an awakened man, that there are moments in which he is led to cry out, *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am*

afraid of thy judgments. I fell, says the Apostle, *at his feet as dead.*

But there is, besides this, the path of God's providential dispensations—dark and mysterious as they sometimes are; which have not only depressed, but even overwhelmed the best of men. Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed in his journey. How did Joshua weep at the success of the men of Ai, and lie upon the earth all night before God! Job knew not where to find him, whether he turned to the right-hand or to the left. David sunk in the deep waters till the billows went over him: and Elijah said, *It is enough: take away my life.* Nor need a disciple to be sent a slave to Patmos, to sink in the deep waters of suffering: he may sit at home, in outward peace and plenty, and yet have a thorn in his flesh: a messenger of Satan may be sent that shall cause him, like St. Paul, to be urgent at the throne of grace for deliverance.

But why do I talk of these men? Who are these?—Worms, that might well tremble and sink: Even HE, who stood before John, and before whose feet John fell as dead, was himself overwhelmed, and said, *Why hast thou forsaken me?*

Christians! need I go to cases on record in the Old Testament, or in the New, in opening this subject? What! know YE not what it is to struggle with the powers of darkness? Know YE not,

what it is to hear his voice *in the cool of the day*, after the deed of sin or folly is done, calling after thee and saying, *Where art thou?* Have YE never walked through *the valley of the shadow of death*, scarcely knowing your own voice from that of the tempter's? Did YOU never sink under an overwhelming trouble, saying, *All these things are against me?*—Have YE never sought the solitary place—for what?—to confess your sin?—to pray for deliverance?—to praise for sparing mercy?—Yes—but perhaps, at times, to despond—to pine—and to despair, if not to murmur. If *you* have not known this, the preacher has too often.

But, even in the path of duty and devotion, trials are often at the door. The disciples embarked at Christ's command, yet the storm arose. Had not John trod in the steps of his Master, he probably would not have been brought to suffer at Patmos. Let us not be afraid of suffering in such a path. Let us mark our encouragements—

I fell at his feet as dead; but he laid his right-hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not.

"I am here," as if the Apostle had said, "cut off from the church—silenced in my ministry—but can I forget that it is the Lord's Day? May I not here be in the Spirit? Did he not say, *I will not leave you orphans?*—Is not his promise enough, though I see nothing?—His presence can make a heaven of Patmos." And it is as if his Master had said—"*Fear not*, John: *for I am*

with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness. None shall silence the minister whom I send, nor prevent the communications which I please to afford. I am the ladder which Jacob saw: when I lay in the manger, I set the foot of it upon the earth; and the top of it reaches to heaven, for, *I am the Almighty.* Write to the Churches what I dictate; and thy writing shall instruct every Church of mine that shall exist in the world. I will open to thee my councils. I will unseal my providences. Thou shalt see the vials of my wrath, which I pour upon the ungodly; and thou shalt see *the New Jerusalem* itself *descending from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband,* and *blessed is he that shall hear and read the words of the prophecy of this book.*"

And what, let me ask, is the design of writing and preaching the word? Is it not, that, "through patience and comfort of the Scripture, we might have hope?"—Does not the promise stand like a rock in the midst of storms? *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they who have not seen him, and yet have believed.* Believed what?—Some tradition, or history of Christ, unfelt—unemployed? No!—But, blessed are they, who, though they see him not, yet rejoice in the merit of his blood—in the power of his grace—in his all-sufficiency to help and

comfort them in all dangers and adversities. Blessed is that man, who, *looking unto Jesus*, though but imperfectly, can say to Him, "*Lord, I believe: help thou my unbelief.* Thou art enough for me, sick and in prison—solitary and sore vexed,—fallen at thy feet as guilty and depraved: yet, lay thy hand upon me, and say unto me *Fear not.* Oh, help me but to rest on what thou hast said already in thy word."

Brethren! the cry of nature, in every one of us, is for relief under our various troubles; and yet how backward are we to learn the method of obtaining it! But all true and abiding relief must come to us as it did to the afflicted man in Acts iv. 10, 11, 12. In this way Christ *abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself:* and he himself hath said, *If any man*—pray mark the words—*if any man love me, my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

It is too true, that unbelief, setting in with a dark providence, may rob the Christian of the *comforts* of these truths—But—*the Lord changeth not.* He had promised deliverance to Israel in their Egyptian bondage, though they had lost all hope of it. But the appointed time came; and, behold, he appears in a bush; flaming, but unconsumed—the emblem of his suffering church. *I have surely seen,* said he, *the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their*

cry by reason of their task-masters: for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them. Exod. iii. 7, 8.

It is the merciful dispensation of a depressed Christian, that, though he may forget his Saviour, that Saviour can never forget himself.

Two desponding disciples may travel to Emmaus, talking of one, who, they thought, would have redeemed Israel. And is it not so? Had he not just redeemed Israel, by laying down his life according to prophecy?—*O fools, and slow of heart that we are to believe all that God,* by his prophets, *has spoken!* After he has done all for us, he is often found walking with us while we are crying *Where is he?*

When Saul, *breathing out threatenings and slaughter,* went to Damascus, it is more than probable, that, not only the persecutor, but many of the persecuted saints, little expected that he, who so lately expired on the cross, would be so nigh at hand to vindicate his cause, and muzzle the pharisaic tyger bent on blood. And how much less did they expect, that he would then fulfil that prophecy, *The wolf shall lie down with the lamb!* and cause a persecutor to become both a preacher and a martyr for his sake!

But *Christ* is *the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever:*—the same Saviour in the burning bush, or on the bloody cross:—the same at Emmaus—at Damascus—or in Patmos.—However wrong

in our *frames*, let us endeavour to be right and firm in our *principles:* and this is *one*, That unbelief is the liar and the robber,—but Christ abideth faithful, and never did nor ever can deny himself. *He, that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches*,

Art *thou* a CHRISTIAN?—for *he* only, *that overcometh, shall inherit all things.* Are you seeking by Christ to overcome the world in its lusts—in its vanities—in its false religion? Do not tell me that you have religion: so has the stupid idolater: so has the unbelieving Jew: so has the formalist: so had they who crucified Christ: so had Paul, the persecutor, when he was stopped in his way to Damascus.—I verily believe that Satan hath no more sure and effectual way of binding the minds of men, than by a false and dead religion. Nor is it any proof that you are a Christian, because you are in trouble; for *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*, whether he be a Christian or not. But the question, "Are you a Christian?" implies, Have you faith—hope—love? Have you renounced yourself; both sinful and righteous self: and have you come, as a perishing sinner, to the foot of the cross?—And are you running the race set before you, *looking unto Jesus?* My prayer to God is, that you may rest in no Christianity short of this; and that he may give you no ease till you are convinced of its necessity, and

possessed of its blessings—that *both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together.*

CARNAL—DECEIVED PROFESSOR—awake!—*Consider, all ye that forget God.* If one, who had lain on the breast of Christ, and knew his relation to him, yet now fell at his feet overwhelmed with his glory, where must you fall, when he shall come with greater glory to judge the quick and the dead? Did you ever consider how soon you may be brought to frightful solitude—to bereavements—sickness—Death? What is to support you there? How awful a sight have I seen, in attending the death-bed of a rich man, just beginning to discover his mistake! His wealth on the wing—his soul overwhelmed with guilt—eternity before him—but no comforter!—Comforter did I say?—the very thought of meeting Christ was his greatest torment.

But why do I speak of others?—What could I have done myself lately, when all hope of standing in this pulpit seemed taken away, and every present comfort seemed to vanish like a dream? "Oh," thought I, "that I could tell my hearers at St. John's, what I feel of the worth of Christ, and of the support which his presence alone can afford in extremities!"

Ought I not to be his witness? I ought, though in a lower sene than that of the Apostle, to say, *He laid his right-hand upon me, saying, Fear not.*

Oh, that "in the hour of death and in the day of judgment," no one of you may know the value of this support by the want of it!

I speak next to those who are RELIGIOUS, BUT YET HAVE NO DISTINCT AND CONSOLATORY VIEWS OF CHRIST.

But what is Christianity, without communion with the Head? I was much affected once to hear a poor dying creature say—"Ah! sir, you bid me think of God—but who is he? I know not what to think of, when you speak of God; and how can I draw comfort from such thoughts?"

God grant you may never be left in such darkness in your extremity! And, in order that you may not, beg of him this day to grant you his Holy Spirit to open and apply his word. Then you will find one who is *Emanuel: God with us.* Then you will learn that *he, who hath seen him, hath seen the Father.*

Christ is God stooping to the weakness of man, and is *nigh to all them that call upon him.* Endeavour, therefore, to obtain more simple and practical views of Christ. In order to this, you must learn from Christ's own word; that, *He is the bright and morning star* of this dark world: *He is the day spring from on high to visit us:—A light to them that sit in darkness, and the shadow of death—To guide our feet into the way of peace.* Or, to come nearer to our text, *He, that walketh*

now amidst the golden candlesticks (his churches) is *the Alpha and Omega,—the Almighty, who openeth and none shutteth, and shutteth and none openeth, and hath the keys of hell and of death.* Such an one can speak away fear from the heart of his disciple. *His* right-hand is strength: *His* encouragement more than victory.

Simple views, like these, have met fires and racks, dungeons and death, in every form, in Britain as well as in Patmos, and have overcome them all.

Scholars puzzle themselves and others with large and complicated statements, nice and often useless distinctions. Brethren! Christianity stoops to the condition and capacities of the weakest, the poorest, the most occupied, and the most illiterate man. Nay—these men have derived the most benefit from Christ. But how? "I am," says the poor man, "no scholar; but I am a sinner. I am afflicted—I am friendless—I am passing from time to eternity—I have but one only hope—*The Lord thinketh upon me.* He was anointed to preach his Gospel to the poor. He said, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* I will sit under his shadow. I will stand waiting at the foot of his cross.

'Let me dwell on Golgotha,
'Weep and love my life away,
'While I see him on the tree
'Weep, and bleed, and die for me.'

And here I know—I know I shall not weep and wait in vain."

My Dear Hearers! is this the simple religion of a poor man? Can you tell me of a better or a safer, for a rich one? What would Dives in torments now give for the religion of Lazarus? "In all time of our tribulation—in all time of our wealth—in the hour of death and in the day of judgment," O thou Son of David have mercy upon us: lay thy right-hand upon us, and say unto us—*Fear not.*

But my subject is still more appropriate to those, WHO ARE CHRISTIANS, AND WHO MAY HAVE COME THIS DAY TO THE HOUSE OF GOD IN DEPRESSING CIRCUMSTANCES.

To such I would offer a few general instructions.

Are you a Christian indeed, and not in word only? Imitate the Apostle; and stop not, in your trouble, at the immediate instruments of it. He speaks nothing of the men who adjudged him to this solitude: he does not relate the particulars of his hard and unjust lot. When we look so much at our adversaries, it is because we look so little at that hand in which is the sword. We are continually erring by taking this low ground. *Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires:* look to him alone, and expect him to walk with you in the fire, and not a hair of your head shall be singed. Honour the faithfulness of your Lord,

by expecting his presence when you most need it. Where did Moses receive his first encouraging visitation?—When he fled a trembling exile, and led a few sheep in solitude. When was Jacob pronounced *a prince, and a prevailer with God and man?*—In the night of his trouble, when he wept and made supplication to the Angel of the Covenant. When was Abraham specially blessed and supported by the promises?—In the mount of trial.

Now it is decreed, *Them, that honour me, I will honour.* Whatever light, strength, consolation, deliverance comes to man, it is decreed that it shall come out of the fulness of Christ. What then is the inference? Do you wish this week to walk in sunshine of heart?—Look unto Jesus. Would you obtain peace and pardon under a wounded spirit?—Look unto Jesus, and your burden shall fall off. Would you lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees?—Look unto Jesus. Would you run with patience the race that is set before you?—It must be done by *looking unto Jesus.* Have you lost your evidence and comfort?—Where can they be recovered but by *looking unto Jesus.* As you were excellently reminded this day, when a child has spilled the water which it was fetching from the fountain, to the same fountain must it return in order to replenish its pitcher. May God the Spirit enable us to apply these truths.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT, CONQUEST, AND CROWN.

REV. iii. 21.

To Him, that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

WE cannot, perhaps, discover a more common error among men than this:—a man found hoping for the end, who does not employ the means. *The soul of the sluggard*, saith the Wise Man, *desireth and hath nothing*.

The text is connected with the message sent to the Church at Laodicea. *And unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, write, These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. So, then, because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that*

that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten:—We continually mistake on this point: we are apt to think that they, who flatter us and humour us in our sins, are our friends; whereas the true friend rebukes those, whom he loves:—*Be zealous, therefore; and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* Then he repeats what occurs at the end of almost every message sent to these Churches, *To him, that overcometh*—to the conqueror—*To him, that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He, that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

There are three things before us.

1. A CONFLICT:—For there can be no Conquest, but what first implies a Conflict.

2. A CONQUEST, following the Conflict.

3. A CROWN:—The sitting down with Christ upon his throne. This Crown he secures to the man, who enters into the Conflict, and obtains the Conquest.

1. We will consider the CONFLICT.

Some one is to be contended with: enemies are to be overcome: for conquest, as I have said, implies conflict.

The Church of Laodicea had fallen into a careless and sleepy state. It was all well!—They were a Church of Christ, and Christ would take care of his church!—whereas Christ says, "*I come as a refiner.* You *are* a Church, but a Church of what kind? Rise, and maintain the conflict, if you would receive the crown."

This conflict will be in this world perpetual. Who can say that he has done conflicting, while he has to combat with the world, the flesh, and the devil? If any man might seem to have gained the complete victory, it must have been Paul the Apostle, who *laboured more abundantly than all the apostles:* yet had he done with the conflict? No! says he, "*Know ye not, that they, which run in a race, run all; but one receiveth the prize? so run, that ye may obtain—I therefore so run, not as uncertainly: so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.* I must never lay down the conflict, while I am in this world; but I must labour and strive, I must run and fight, and I must fight and run, in order that I may gain the victory."

The day is coming, Brethren! which will

declare the Christian Hero to be a Hero indeed! Then shall his achievements be recorded, when the great conquerors of this world are all passed by and forgotten! He shall be found to have been fighting the battles of his God—proposing nothing short of an everlasting victory over all his enemies! Then will he be found the only truly honourable, noble, and successful conflictor! more worthy to be regarded of God, of angels, and of saints, than all the conquerors who have glittered on the page of history!

II. We will consider the CONQUEST here spoken of.

A Christian hopes to conquer, by simply trusting to the Captain of his Salvation—following his steps—using his arms—looking up daily to him for help and strength, that he may not contend in vain. That conflict will not be crowned, which will not endure to the end; and, in order to endure, it must have a right spirit—warrant—and power. The hope, which we have, is this: that *greater is he, that is in us; than he, that is in the world.—I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life, which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* Christ is our strength—our merit—our leader,—and our light to walk by.

Brethren! in order to maintain a conflict, with any prospect of conquest, we must set out in the

name of the Lord: *I will go forth*, says David: but it shall be *in the strength of the Lord God.* In such a conflict as this, the battle is not ours, but God's. A Christian may be foiled, indeed, and trodden down; and yet he may, at length, win the battle: and, in this way of using his Master's armour, and treading in his steps, he shall undoubtedly gain the victory.

Religion is a much more deep and spiritual warfare, than many of you, perhaps, suppose. *We wrestle not* only *against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* But, remember, also, that your help lies in the power of God, and the armour of righteousness on your right-hand and on your left. Victory is assured:

> "The feeblest saint shall win the day,
> Though death and hell obstruct his way."

If you ask me what a Christian has to overcome, I answer, with the Apostle, *This is the victory, which overcometh the* WORLD, *even our faith.* The World is the Christian's grand enemy. There Satan is displaying his baits before the eyes of men; ever crying, as it were, "Look here!—Look there!" There, the Flesh is alarmed by frowns and allured by favours: its reasonings—its sensualities—are all called into action there. There, are ten thousand deceits suited to different frames and constitutions. Satan has his snares

for the young man, and his snares for the old: he has something for the depressed, to sink them into despondency; and something for the proud and presumptuous, to push them on to ruin. We have to meet the day in which we live, with its errors and evil customs: and we have to encounter the difficulties peculiar to our individual path —peculiar to the dispensation of Providence under which we are cast. Painful, tedious, and puzzling discouragements, perhaps, make the pilgrim weary because of the way. Difficulties rise up in the family, and difficulties in our profession: there are different things at different times, all of which have a united influence in stopping the Christian Soldier in his course. But— *To him, that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne!*

While we are stating the difficulties of the Christian warfare, some one may, perhaps, say, "You alarm me!—What am I, a feeble and helpless creature, to do under such difficulties?"—Of yourself, nothing at all! You are not called to fight in your own strength; nor to carry on this war at your own charge. But, Brethren! attend to this peculiarity of the Gospel: it places things before your eyes in their true colours. An enemy is aiming at the life of your souls; but, when God speaks of victory over him, he speaks of what he promises strength to achieve, provided we war according to his command.

Observe the promise:—*To him, that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.* You are to conquer, as Christ conquered—expecting the Holy Spirit to work in your souls, what it wrought in Him when it raised him from the dead.

In the twelfth chapter of this book, we read, *I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him*—but how? I particularly call your attention to the means of their victory—*They overcame him, by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

They overcame BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB. Satan might charge guilt on the conscience, and attempt to drive them away in despair: he might tell them there was no hope, and tempt them to cast away their confidence. But they would point to *the blood of the Lamb:*—to the infinite merit of the atoning Saviour:—to the obedience by which many become righteous:—to the ransom found by God. They might say, *If God be for us, who can be against us? He, that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all*

things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. They overcame him *by the blood of the Lamb.*

They overcame, BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY. While Satan was sowing tares, and trying to confound the truth, they were stedfast in confessing Christ before men. They spake his truths: they held fast these truths: on these they lived, and by them they overcame.

And THEY LOVED NOT THEIR LIVES UNTO THE DEATH. As if they should say, "Of what importance is it whether we live or die? *If we live, we live unto the Lord; and, if we die, we die unto the Lord:* the sooner we die, the sooner we shall be glorified—shall begin the praises of God and of the Lamb. Of what value then are our lives to us? Let us take hold of life eternal! Let no man take our crown!"

This conquest proceeds upon a very different principle from every other. It is pursued, and in some degree obtained and enjoyed, in this world; but it has its completion when Christ says, "*Well done,* good and faithful soldier! thou has fought the good fight! thou hast kept the faith! I have no more for thee to do on earth: come up and take thy crown!" for——*To him, that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

III. Here is not only a Conflict implied, and a

Conquest mentioned, but a CROWN that shall be bestowed.

In reading the Scriptures, we find some things mentioned historically; and some incidentally, as it were. They are truths, but not truths of prime importance; they do not enter into the life of religion. But there are other truths, which recur again and again, and sometimes several times in the same chapter, because they are of primary value:—they should never be absent from our minds. Is not this exactly our method with our children? While we give them many instructions, those things, which are indispensable, we strive to rivet on their hearts, by continual repetition.

Mark the expression in the text. As *we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him*, before whom we must all shortly appear; as we are *looking for and hasting to the coming of the Son of God*—the hope of eternal life, and a crown of glory; our Master meets us on the way, and again and again does he speak of *the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.*

Look, for instance, into the second and third chapters. *He, that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches:—To him that* OVERCOMETH, *will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* Again:—*He, that hath an ear, let him hear what he Spirit saith unto the Churches:—He, that* VERCOMETH, *shall not be hurt of the second death.*

Again: *He, that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches:—To him, that* OVERCOMETH, *will I give to eat of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.* Again: *And he, that* OVERCOMETH, *and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron—and I will give him the morning star.* Again: *He, that* OVERCOMETH, *the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.* Again: *Him, that* OVERCOMETH, *will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.* And again, in the text: *To him that* OVERCOMETH, *will I grant to sit with me, in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

I have shewn you how the blessing is marked and repeated; but if you were to ask me the precise meaning of the terms here employed to shew the eternal weight of reward which awaits the Christian Soldier, perhaps I should say, No matter!—it is enough, that HE—the Great Captain of

our Salvation—knows the full meaning of them; and that they all imply what he calls HIS glory: *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold* MY GLORY. It is enough that *he* knows, and that *we shall* know, although as yet *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* These are all terms, however, inviting *him* to conquer, *whom the King delighteth to honour:* and, therefore, let us conceive never so highly, no idea that we can entertain can ever come near to the glory of the crown which God hath promised.

Brethren! it is by conflict and by conquest, as you see, that a Christian is conformed to his Lord and Head. EVEN AS, says he——EVEN AS *I overcame*, so must you; for a Christian fights for his life. "Tell me not," will he say, "of the difficulties which may stand in my way! Will God fight for me? Will he enable me to overcome? Is he faithful? Is he to be trusted? Sin and Satan have held me captive; but they have only sunk me, and would have sunk me to the depths of hell: but my Master—my example—stands before me: he went forth through trial and conflict: he fought the good fight of faith, and we, his disciples, are following him."

Brethren! whatever short roads to heaven may be invented by sects and parties, Ancient Chris-

tianity, the good old way, is the way of the cross —the way of contest and of conquest. *This is a faithful saying*—some may arise in the Church who will contradict this—but, whatever they say, *This is a faithful saying: If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.*

Should any one say, "Oh, that this was not so true as it is! And yet it seems so plain, that I cannot deny it. I would escape this conflict: I would not weather these trials: I would not pass through the fire and the water, in my way to the kingdom"—I ask, my brother! are not you like the soldier who should say, "Oh, that I might be a soldier, but never fight? Oh, that I might eat the king's bread, and wear his clothes, but never fight his battles?" Is this a SOLDIER?

My Dear Hearers, let us abide by the truth. Nothing else will support us. We may bow to the truth, but it will not bow to us: if we stand by it, it will stand by us. And the truth is, that our posts, as Christians, are posts of honour and of danger: and if there had not been something to strive with, the Apostle had not said, *Stand fast! quit you like men!* nor would another have said, *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.*

I say not these things to alarm or to discourage you. Nay, I say, Fear not any consequences, if you are honest and in earnest. Fearfulness, as

well as presumption, is a temptation. In that dreadful catalogue, given in the twenty-first chapter, of those who *shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone*—terrible as that list is—among them stand the *fearful!*

Remember, then, that, if we are called to trial, Christ is no unconcerned spectator. St. Paul prayed to him in his contest, but he said, "*My grace is sufficient—my strength is made perfect in weakness.* Fear not a thorn in the flesh. Fear not the buffetings of Satan. This is the way of safety—the consecrated way—the work of Christ's soldiers: and my soldiers shall ever hear my voice, saying, *My grace is sufficient:* but, still, the decree has gone forth; that it is by conflict and conquest, that a Christian is conformed to his Head, and obtains the crown of glory."

"I meet," says the Christian—I am now speaking the language of a faithful soldier of Christ, millions of whom have passed over the stage of life, and have entered the rest which remains for God's soldiers, have fought the fight of faith, finished the course, and received the crown—"I meet," says such an one, "with many sharp conflicts—hard battles I know—I find that religion will cost me something: but Oh how small the cost, in comparison with what I must pay if I do not overcome!—If I do not conquer, I must be conquered: and I know the dreadful consequences of being conquered by such an enemy as

A

FRIENDLY VISIT,

&c. &c.

YOUR present affliction, my Dear Friend, demands something more than the usual forms of condolence. Sorrow, which, like yours, cannot be prevented, may yet be *alleviated* and *improved.* This is my design in addressing you; and, if I seem to intrude upon your retirement, let my motive be my apology. Having felt how much *better it is to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting* (Eccl. vii. 2); having received my best *Lessons, Companions,* and even *Comforts,* in it; I would administer from my little stock of experience: and, while I thus endeavour to assist your meditations, shall rejoice if I may contribute, though but a mite, to your comfort.

Were I, indeed, acquainted with the peculiar circumstances of your loss, I should employ particular considerations. But my present address can have only a *general* aim: which is to acquaint the heart, at a favourable moment, with its grand concerns; to give it a serious impression, when

softened, and a heavenly direction, when *moved*. Let us, therefore, sit down humbly together in this House of Mourning. If *the heart of the wise be found* here (Eccl. vii. 4) your experience, I hope, will prove that here also it is *formed:*— and let us calmly contemplate some momentous Objects intimately connected with it, and viewed with peculiar advantage from it.

OUR GOD is the first of these objects: with Him we seldom form any close acquaintance till we meet him in trouble. He commands silence now, that He may be heard; and removes intervening objects, that He may be seen. A SOVEREIGN DISPOSER appears, who, as *Lord of all*, hath only resumed what he lent; whose will is the law of his creatures, and who expressly declares his will in the present affliction. We should seriously consider that all allowed repugnance to the determinations of his government, however made known to us, is SIN; and that every wish to alter the appointments of his wisdom, is FOLLY:— *we know not what we ask.* When GOD discovers himself in any matter, they, who know him, *will keep silence before him:* Hab. ii. 20. *Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?* How just was the reply! *Behold I am vile! what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth:* Job xl. 2, 4.

This silent submission under trying dispensations, is variously exemplified, as well as incu-

cated, in the Scriptures. An awful instance of sin and sorrow occurs in the family of Aaron: his sons disregarded a divine appointment, and *there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them; but* Aaron *held his peace:* Lev. x. 2, 3.—Eli, in similar circumstances, silenced his heart with this single but sufficient consideration, *It is the Lord:* 1 Sam. iii. 18.—David, under a stroke which he declares consumed him, observes, *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because* THOU *didst it:* Ps. xxxix. 9.—And Job, when stript of every comfort, blessed the name of him who *took away,* as well as *gave:* Job. i. 21.—Whatever be the nature of your calamity, may it be attended with such an humble and child-like spirit as these holy men possessed!

But the Sovereign Disposer is also the COMPASSIONATE FATHER. Among other instances of his tenderness, you may have observed the peculiar supports which he affords under peculiar trials. Let us mark and acknowledge the hand, which mingles mercy with judgment, and alleviation with distress. The parents I have just mentioned lost their children under circumstances far more distressing than yours. The desire of your eyes (if not the idol of your heart) was, perhaps, almost a stranger: you strove hard to detain it, but He, who took the young children into his arms and blessed them, took yours; and, taking it, seemed to say, "*What I do thou knowest not now, but*

thou shalt know hereafter: (John xiii. 7.) Patiently *suffer this little one to come unto me, for of such is my kingdom* composed: (Matt. xix. 14.) *Verily I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father!* Matt. xviii. 10.) If I take away your child, I take it to myself. Is not this infinitely beyond any thing you could do for it? Could you say to it, if it had lived, Thou shalt *weep no more: the days of thy mourning are ended?* (Isa. xxx. 19). Could you shew it any thing in this world like *the glory of God, and of the Lamb?* (Rev. xxii. 3.) Could you raise it to any honour here like *receiving a crown of life?*" James i. 12.

The voice of a *Father of mercies and a God of all comfort* (2 Cor. i. 3.) speaks as distinctly in the death as in the birth of an infant. A *voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping: Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border:* Jer. xxxi. 15, 16. *It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish:* Matt. xviii. 14.

Is it a pious friend that has just yielded up his breath? The same voice seems to say, "Turn from him:" or, rather, "Turn from his *clay*, his faded *garment.—He* himself *is taken from the evil to come: he is entered into peace:*" Isa. lvii. 1, 2.

When the able Minister, the exemplary Parent, or the faithful Partner depart, a consternation often seizes the circles which they blessed. We are so stunned by the sudden blow, or so occupied with the distressing circumstances, that we scarcely can hear God saying, "*Fear not, I, even I, am he that comforteth you:* Isa. li. 12. I, your Father, am yet alive. I gave you your departed friend. I sent every benefit which was conveyed through him. Trust me for blessings yet in store. Trust me with him, and with yourselves."

Whatever notions one who lives *without God in the world* may form of dying, *We* should learn from his word to regard the departure of the just merely as a *Translation;*—a change, in which nothing is lost which is really valuable. As surely as we *believe that Jesus died and rose again,* so surely do we believe that *them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him:* 1 Thess. iv. 14. Taught of God, we should view Losses, Sickness, Pain and Death, but as the several trying stages by which a good man, like Joseph, is conducted from a *Tent* to a *Court:*——*Sin,* his disorder; *Christ,* his physician; *Pain,* his medicine; the *Bible,* his support; the *Grave,* his bed; and *Death* itself, an Angel, expressly sent to release the worn-out Labourer, or crown the faithful Soldier. *I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth:*

Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works follow them: Rev. xiv. 13.

But, admitting the state of your departed friend to be doubtful, yet, in all cases that are really so, let us cultivate honourable thoughts of God: let us remember the FAITHFUL CREATOR. Righteousness is his throne, though clouds surround it. Whatever he has left *obscure*, we may safely leave him to explain. Let us recollect, that, amidst innumerable obscurities, he hath made things *clear* in proportion as they are *important:* and therefore repeatedly urges it upon our consciences, that the door is still open to US;—that it is awful to stand before it *unresolved;*—that we must trust him to-day; and that to-morrow he will equally remove our conjectures and our complaints.

Perhaps you are ready to reply, "*I have heard many such things:* and *I also could speak as you do, if your soul were in my soul's stead* (Job xvi. 2, 4:) but my heart and my expectations are so crushed by this blow, that I can hear nothing but *Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound grievous: thou hast no healing medicines:*" Jer. xxx. 12, 13.

Beware, however, of falling into their sin who *limited the Holy One of Israel:* Ps. lxxviii. 41. There is a charge continually brought against man, that, in his troubles, the Source and the Resource are equally forgotten. *Though afflic-*

tion cometh not forth of the dust: yet *none saith where is God my Maker, who giveth Songs in the night?* Job v. 6. xxxv. 10. Endeavour, then, in extremities, to recollect an ALL-SUFFICIENT FRIEND——a very present HELP in trouble. He, at least, may add, (as he does in the passage just alluded to) *I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds: saith the Lord.* Cannot the voice which rebuked a tempestuous sea calm our troubled spirits? Is his hand shortened at all, that he cannot *bless our latter end,* like Job's, *more than the beginning?* Job xlii. 12. Is it not the Lord, *that maketh poor and maketh rich; that bringeth low and lifteth up?* 1 Sam. ii. 7. Many, whose hearts have been desolate like yours, while they have looked *around,* have at length *looked* UPWARD *unto Him and been lightened:* Ps. xxxiv. 5. A single promise has afforded them not only relief, but strong consolation.

Let us, therefore, my Dear Friend, *turn again to this strong-hold as prisoners of hope. Even to-day can he render double to us:* Zech. ix. 12. Let us look to *Abraham's* God, and his encouragement is ours: *Fear not: I am* GOD ALMIGHTY: Gen. xvii. 1. *q. d.* "I am all-sufficient in all cases. I am enough; *and able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think:* (Eph. iii. 20.) I have taken away thy *Gourd,* but dost thou well to be angry? Have I left nothing for thankful-

ness? This world, however, cannot be your *home*, nor its objects your *consolation:* they are all too poor for the soul of man. *Look unto me and be saved:* (Isa. xlv. 22.) *Acquaint thyself with Me and be at peace:* (Job xxii. 21.) *Follow Me and you shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life:* (John viii. 12.) However dark and distressing the present state of things may appear, *commit thy fatherless children to my care, I will preserve them alive; and let the widows trust in Me:*" Jer. xlix. 11.

Still, the beloved object is gone, and your heart follows it. You can scarcely receive counsel from infinite Wisdom, or comfort from Omnipotence. To every fresh encouragement you are ready to reply, *Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise thee? Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction?* Ps. lxxxviii. 10, 11.—His word repeatedly assures you they shall; and that *all that are in the graves shall hear his voice:* John v. 28. But it informs you also, that he can do abundantly more for the living than merely restore their dead friends, or revive their fainting spirits: it teaches you that He can sanctify the separation; that he can give a divine life to the survivor, *though dead in trespasses and sins,* (Eph. ii. 1), and inseparably unite both in his kingdom.—If the Comforter could make up for the loss of *Christ's*

bodily presence; yea, make it even *expedient* that HE *should go away* (John xvi. 7;) how much more can he supply the place of every creature!

May this COMFORTER, writing his word in your mind, help you to say with a confidence highly honourable to himself and his Gospel, "My perishing gourd is, indeed, withered a day before I expected it: my broken reed is gone; but God is left,—*a father to the fatherless,—a husband to the widow:* (Ps. lxviii. 5.) *And now, Lord, what wait I for? truly my hope is in thee:* (Ps. xxxix. 7.) Thou canst give me, *in thy house, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters,* even *an everlasting name, which shall not be cut off:* (Isa. lvi. 5.) And, therefore, *though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, yet I will rejoice in the* LORD, *I will joy in the* GOD OF MY SALVATION: Hab. iii. 17, 18.

Once more: let us endeavour, at such seasons as these, to recognise a GRACIOUS MONITOR. Whenever the Lord *strikes* he *speaks.* Let us listen, at such a time as this, with humble attention; yet with holy confidence; for it is the voice of a *Friend,*—a wonderful *Counsellor.* Let us, with the prophet, resolve to ascend the tower of observation, and observe *what he will say unto us, and what we shall answer when we are reproved.* If, with him, we thus watch our dispensation, *at the end,* like his, *it shall speak:* Hab. ii. 1—3.

God is continually raising up witnesses, and

sending them in his name to *sound the alarm* in *Zion:* Joel ii. 1. He charges them to admonish the wise, as well as the foolish Virgin, to beware of slumbering, since the bridegroom is at hand: and when one is called away, to cry to those that remain, *Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh:* Matth. xxiv. 44. Some, indeed, like the sons of Lot, desperately scorn the admonition, and treat it as the fear of dotage: Gen. xix. 14. Some, like those in the Acts, *are in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? and others mocking reply, These men are full of new wine:* Acts ii. 12, 13. But TRUTH, like a rock furiously assaulted, but unshaken, remains to scorn its scorners: and, while the witnesses continue to bear a faithful and consistent testimony, God, sooner or later, appears in vindication of their integrity and of his own word. Entering a careless family, he smites the first-born; and as one that *will* be heard, calls aloud, *Awake thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light:* Eph. v. 14.

And is it not, my Afflicted Friend, an infinite mercy, if, by *any* means, God will enter with such a *light?*—that he will rouse such a *sleeper?*——that, by his minister *Death*, he will arrest the attention of him who has slighted every other minister? What patience! what long suffering! to take such an one apart; bring him, from noise

and occupation, into the secret and silent chamber; speak to his heart; and seal the most important truths on it, by the most affecting impressions! Is it not saying, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I make thee as Admah:* Hosea xi. 8. Certain it is, that questions, which before only reached the ear, often now, like barbed arrows, remain fixed in the conscience. Conscience, no longer stifled or amused, discovers the CONTENDER; and, trembling before him, cries, *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God:* Jer. xxxi. 18.

This, I say, is often the case, and should it be realized in yours, as it has been in that of your present Visitor;—if, instead of flying for relief to every object but God, you are brought humbly to his feet with patient submission, serious inquiry, fervent prayer, holy resolution, and firm reliance: ——if, in a word, by the severest stroke, the *enchantment* is also broken, your soul *escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler,* (Ps. cxxiv. 7,) and returned to its proper rest; what reason will you have to say

> Those we call *wretched* are a chosen band.—
> Amid my list of blessings infinite,
> Stand this the foremost,—'*That my heart has bled.*'
> For *All* I bless Thee;—Most, for the *severe;*
> *Her* death, *my own* at hand———

But death at hand, as an old writer expresses it, should be death in view, and lead us to consider, next,

OUR PROSPECTS from this House of Sorrow, as the inhabitants of a present and future world.

Many suppose that they can best contemplate the *present* world, by frequenting the *House of Mirth:* Eccl. vii. 4. Their whole deportment, however, shews that it makes them much too giddy for serious observation: *having eyes they see not:* Mark viii. 18.

Look at the deceased, and contemplate present things. His days, a *hand-breath:* his beauty, consumed like the *moth-fretten garment:* his cares and pleasures, a *dream:* his attainments, as the *grass;* which flourisheth in the morning, and in the evening is cut down and withereth: his years, a *tale:* his strength *labour and sorrow.* So soon is the whole *cut off and fled,* that we cannot help repeating with the Psalmist, *Verily, every* man, at his *best estate, is altogether* VANITY: (Ps. xxxix and xc.) but *a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanishes away:* James iv. 14.

Few, perhaps, reflect, when they follow a friend to his grave, that life itself exhibits little more than a funeral procession, where friend follows friend; weeping to-day, and wept-for to-morrow. While we are talking of one, another passes: we are alarmed; but behold a third! There is, how-

ever, relief in this very reflection: "My friend is gone; but am I weeping, as if I were to *stay?* Is he sent for in the *morning?* in the *afternoon* I shall certainly be called." Inconsolable distress, therefore, may ungird our loins, may waste our hours, and cause us to make fatal mistakes in the journey, but does not bring us forward a single step towards meeting our Friends in that state, where present joys and sorrows will be recollected only as the dream of a distempered night.

If, after many former admonitions, an ENEMY still urged us to climb: and, as we ascended, pointed *to the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them* (Matt. iv. 8;) if our hearts have been the dupes of the vanishing prospect, and our ears eagerly heard the proposal *All these things will I give thee* (Matt. iv. 9;) let us now hear the voice of a FRIEND, calling us, though in an unexpected way, *to commune with our heart and be still:* (Ps. iv. 4)—— to know *at least in this our day of visitation, the things which belong to our peace:* and also what those things are which *hide them from our eyes:* Luke xix. 42.

It is at such seasons as these, that we more clearly detect the lies of life. It is in the House of Mourning, that, what the Scripture calls, *lying vanities,* lie peculiarly naked and exposed. Let us here examine what so lately dazzled us. What now is the *purple and fine linen* (Luke xvi. 19) that caught our eye? What is it to fare sumptuously

only for a *day?* Who is he that cries, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease: eat, drink, and be merry?* (Luke xii. 19.) I trust you now feel the deep misery and utter ruin of that dying creature, who can say nothing better to his soul than *this.* You can scarcely help crying out, What sottishness, what madness this, in a moment so interesting as Life!—with a prospect so awful as eternity!"

The truth is, God speaks variously and incessantly to man respecting his prospects both present and future: but present things seize his heart, blind his eyes, stupify his conscience, and carry him away captive. Now "affliction is God speaking louder," and striving with the heart of man: crying, as he has lately in your house, *Arise and depart: this is not your rest: it is polluted;* and, if you persist in attempting to make a rest of it, *will destroy you with a sore destruction:*" Micah ii. 10.

Our plan, indeed, is the very reverse of his. We love our native soil, and try to strike our roots deeper and deeper into it: firmly fixed in earth, we would fain draw our whole life, strength, and nourishment from it. And here we should not only *fade as a leaf,* (Isa. lxiv. 6,) but, with *every tree that beareth not good fruit, be hewn down and cast into the fire,* (Matt. iii. 10) did not mercy interpose.

We seldom, however, discern mercy in its *first*

approach. "Is it *mercy*," say you, that tears me up by the roots? that cuts the fibres of sweetest union? Does it prune away the finest branches, nip the loveliest buds, and cover the earth with blossoms?"—Yes, verily: since the very life of the whole often depends upon the removal of a part, Mercy will wound to heal. Regard to the tree will strip off its most flourishing suckers. The great husbandman will not fail to adopt the sharpest means for the improvement of his choicest plants: *for every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*: (John xv. 2.) *Though the Lord cause grief*, yet it is in *compassion*, and *according to the multitude of his mercies; for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men* (Lam. iii. 32, 33;) but, soon or late, instructs all his children to say, *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right; and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me:* Ps. cxix. 75.

Let not, therefore, the change of the present scene discompose, but direct us. It changes, in order to present the only unchangeable one. By thus rending the veils which men try to throw over a dying state, and discovering TEKEL* written on every creature, the most careless are often so roused, that they seem to awake and recover themselves: they appear, for a time at least, to become *wise*, to *understand these things*, and

* *i. e.* "wanting." Dan. v. 27.

seriously to *consider their latter end:* (Deut. xxxii. 29). May this salutary impression, however, my Dear Friend, never be worne from *your* mind; but lead you habitually to look from this fading, to that abiding prospect, which is to be found only in the ETERNAL WORLD,—and on which it may be necessary here to drop a reflection or two.

I think you must often have remarked, that the urgency and bustle of present things, not only raise a cloud of dust before our future prospects, but early beget a false principle that the *present* life is the *only* one. You must also have observed, that ten thousand false maxims, which daily fly through the world, take their rise from this prime falsehood. Whereas, in fact, the present life, instead of being the *whole*, is comparatively *nothing:* ——a *Stage*, a *Porch*, a *Dream*, a weary day's *Journey*. What is this drop, to the Ocean before us? What this moment, to Eternity? As a Theatre, indeed, in which God exhibits the wonders of his providence and grace; or as a Stage, on which we are to act our parts without any opportunity of repetition; the present state is infinitely grand and important: but surely no greater imposition can be put upon the Pilgrim, than to persuade him that he is at *Home;* or to make him forget and drown his eternal interests in such a vision of the night as this life!

Do you not, my Dear Friend, sensibly perceive

this? While you sit here, does not the cloud break, and the mist subside? Have you not already so realised *a better, that is a heavenly country* (Heb. xi. 16), as to admire him who pitched only a *tent* here, (Heb. xi. 9), but stedfastly looked for *a city that hath foundations* (Heb. xi. 10). Are you not ready to *take hold of the skirt of this Jew*, saying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you?* Zech. viii. 23.

Seeing this, you only see truths ever exhibited in the Scriptures; and living principles in all who are *taught of God:* (John vi. 45) for he alone can enable us to use his own discoveries; and how gracious is he, when he removes any object which might prevent our thus seeing Himself, his Kingdom, and his Righteousness! or the removal of which may prove the occasion of our *seeking* them!

Just before the flood, there were doubtless, among their *men of renown* (Gen. vi. 4), admired projectors: but there appears to have been only one *truly* wise man among them; one who saw and seriously regarded his Prospects. And he, *being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an Ark for the saving of his house:* (Heb. xi. 7). Now such a man is the Christian. He feels *the world passing away with the lusts thereof, but that he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever:* (1 John ii. 17). "I feel,"

says he, "that however finely they dress the pageant of this world, it *passeth by*. (1 Cor. vii. 31.) To a creature like me, going, hastening, such an *Ark* is worth more than ten thousand dying worlds. Let the Gay laugh: *let the Despisers wonder and perish:* (Acts xiii. 41:) with such Prospects before me I *must* be serious. He, that cannot lie, has revealed the *terrors*, as well as the glories, of a future state: he speaks *of a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched*, (Mark ix. 44,) as well as of *a fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore*. (Ps. xvi. 11.) I must not, I dare not, shut my eyes against these awful realities. I will not sacrifice my soul to a jest; nor miss the single opportunity afforded me for its salvation. He, that calls for my whole heart, is worthy of it: while the things which have hitherto engrossed it, though they cannot *satisfy*, I find can *ruin* it. *I will therefore arise and go to my Father*. (Luke xv. 18)—to my Saviour, who has promised to *cast out none that come unto Him*. (John vi. 37.) Yea, doubtless, I *count all things but loss, that I may be found in him*, (Phil. iii. 8, 9,) the true ARK, the only REFUGE, which God has provided for perishing sinners."

Such a man, indeed, is the *Christian*; but the Christian, after all, is but a *Man*. In a state like this, he needs to be continually reminded of his own principles. Even the *wise* Virgin slumbers though the Bridegroom is at hand. But a cry is

often made in the family, before that which will at midnight awaken the world: one like that in the house of Pharaoh for his first-born; or that so lately heard in *yours:* a cry which, while it rouses the sleeper, and fills his eyes with tears and his heart with pangs, often produces such views of God and of the present and eternal state, as all other monitors would have attempted in vain.

Here, then, my afflicted, but, I hope, instructed, Friend, let us study the heavenly science of gaining by *losses*, and rising by *depressions.* Leaving the wilderness, like Moses, let us ascend the mount of scriptural discovery, and survey a prospect of which his was but a shadow. Let us look from vicissitude and desolation, to what alone is *incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away:* (1 Pet. i. 4) and, in the house of affliction and death, let us contemplate a House *not made with hands eternal in the heavens:* (2 Cor. v. 1.) How refreshing, to look from a family bereft of its companions and comforts to *Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerulasem! to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven!* (Heb. xii. 22, 23)—the only family, which cannot be divided:—the only friendship, which shall not disappoint our warmest expectation.

"Glorious as this prospect is," perhaps you are

ready to reply, "I have been long in the habit of viewing it very indistinctly. My attention has been so fixed on one below, that I live looking *into* the Grave rather than *beyond* it. My spirits are so broken, my heart so wounded, and my eyes so dim with watching and weeping, that I can hardly read what is before me, or recollect what I read. If serious reflection composes me for a few moments, I soon relapse, and seen to lose sight of every support. I indeed severely feel what you say concerning the *present* life, but I view the glories of the future like a starving creature, who, looking through the gate of the wealthy, surveys a plenty which but increases his anguish."

There is, however, this difference, at least, between your cases: the plenty which *you* see is *yours*, if you are really willing to accept it. You never received a gift so freely bestowed or so suited to your necessity, as that *Gift of God*, which is *eternal life through Jesus Christ:* Rom. vi. 23.

In order to view this more distinctly, let us consider the sufficiency of

Our PROVISIONS—For *Wisdom hath built her house, she hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, and furnished her table. She also crieth upon the highest [illegible] the city. Whoso is simple [illegible] turn [illegible] to him that*

wanteth understanding she saith, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled: —forsake the foolish, and live: Prov. ix. 1—6.

Man, indeed, is daily reminded by the Thorns at his feet, by the Sweat of his brow, and by the Dust to which he is returning, that his paradise is *lost**: but paradise *regained* is considered rather as a mere idea:—a subject for Poetry. That book, however, which I hope you have chosen as your best companion in the house of mourning, like the vision of Jacob, not only shews the heavens opened, but discovers a gracious medium of communication and intercourse, as it were *a ladder let down from heaven to earth*† :—a medium so suited to the state of man, that the weakest and vilest, who is humble enough to take hold of it as God's ordinance, advance a step at a time, and call for strength to proceed, may climb by it from Earth to Heaven‡.

Are you, my Dear Friend, among the number of those, who stand before God not only as stripped of their *comforts*, but humbled under sin as the cause of all the desolations with which our fallen state abounds?——Open your book at the LXIst chapter of Isaiah. You will there perceive that most precious privilege, paradise restored: the Creator descending to the condition and wants of the creature, and once more holding *communion*

* Gen. iii. 18, 19.

† Gen. xxviii. 12.

‡ Compare Gen. xxviii. with John i. 51.

with him. To the *broken-hearted*, the *captive*, and the *mourner*, is here shewn One mighty to save and to relieve. And, that such should not mistake their friend, our Lord, when he stood up in the synagogue to read, selected this passage; and, having read it, closed the book with saying, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears:* (Luke iv. 21.) "I am," as if he had said, this Deliverer and *Desire of nations, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted: blessed are ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled; blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh:*" Hag. ii. 7. Heb. xiii. 8. Matt. v. 4. Luke vi. 21.

I scarcely need observe, that, in an address like this (a bow drawn at a venture,) formal statements of the different topics would be improper; and therefore, I shall not attempt to describe, in their order, the various Provisions comprehended in that scheme of redemption, usually termed the Gospel. It may be necessary, however, to remark, that the whole is a proposal to the *broken heart;* answering all its objections, and meeting all its wants: and that such a proposal will be cordially received, only in proportion as this disposition prevails.

As it is the *Sick* who best knows how to value a physician, *the Debtor* a surety, and the *Criminal* a pardon; so it is the awakened conscience alone, which will embrace a constitution calculated to

humble the *pride*, and mortify the *corruptions*, as well as relieve the *wants* of man. *If without shedding of blood there can be no remission* (Heb. ix. 22), he, who is earnest to obtain it, will rejoice to find it though on *the accursed tree*: and, however the *preaching of this cross* shall be esteemed *foolishness among them that perish* (1 Cor. i. 18), such an one will not only rejoice in the provision, but magnify the means. *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world:* Gal. vi. 14.

Our Lord represents the blessings of his kingdom under the parable of a magnificent feast, which a *King made for the marriage of his Son:* but points out the ruin of the world in its indisposition to accept his gracious proposal, when *all things were ready*, and invitations repeatedly sent. *They made light of it*, and went *their ways!* However different their pursuits, they all agreed to reject the invitation. They began with *one consent* to make excuse: some urged reasons, and some abused the messengers: (Matt. xxii. 1—6.) But what is this, more than the history of human nature in every age?

Let us, however, my Dear Friend, never forget that the gate lately mentioned, though strait, is *open*; and that only *unbelief* and *indisposition* stand without. Christ has declared that all things are *ready:* may his gracious influence, accompa-

nying this humbling providence, form in you a spiritual taste for them! Certain I am, that, whenever this is attained, his *name* will be *as ointment poured forth:* (Cant. i. 3.) It will give a savour even to obsolete poetry:—

> Christ is a path—if any be misled:
> He is a robe—if any naked be:
> If any chance to hunger—he is bread:
> If any be a bondman—he is free:
> If any be but weak—how strong is he!
> To dead men, life he is—to sick men health:
> To blind men, sight—and to the needy, wealth:
> A pleasure, without loss—a treasure, without stealth.

To prepare the heart for the reception of this treasure, as a God of order, he is pleased to use a system of means; one of which I hope he is now employing for your soul's health.

I love to indulge hope; for affliction is a seed time. And let me freely inquire, since God has called you aside, has spoken so emphatically, and you have had leisure for serious meditation, do not the Provisions of the Gospel appear new, sufficient, and exactly suited to your case? Do you not mark that Gold, which the thief cannot steal? that Foundation, which no tempest can shake? that Life, over which death hath no power? and that Peace, which the world can neither give nor take away? Does not the religion of JESUS, so forgotten and degraded among men, stand forward now as the *one thing needful?* Does not his friendship appear now to be *that better part,* which *shall not be taken away?* (Luke

x. 42), and which alone can help in extremities? In the wreck of human affairs, indeed, it is, that God often makes his truth appear; and causes his Gospel, like a plank thrown out to the perishing mariner, to be properly known and prized.

"These are the great occasions which force the mind to take refuge in religion: when we have no help in ourselves, what can remain but that we look up to a higher and a greater Power? and to what hope may we not raise our eyes and hearts when we consider that the GREATEST *Power is the* BEST.

"Surely there is no (truly wise) man, who, thus afflicted, does not seek succour in the Gospel, which has brought *Life and Immortality to Light*. The precepts of EPICURUS, who teaches us to endure what the Laws of the Universe make necessary, may silence, but not *content* us. The dictates of Zeno, who commands us to look with indifference on external things, may dispose us to conceal our sorrow, but cannot *assuage* it. Real alleviation of the loss of friends, and rational tranquillity in the prospect of our own dissolution, can be received only from the promises of him, in whose hands are life and death; and from the assurances of another and better state, in which all tears will be wiped from the eyes, and the whole soul shall be filled with

joy. Philosophy may infuse STUBBORNNESS, but Religion only can give PATIENCE*."

In health and ease, ingenious speculations may amuse and satisfy us; but I think you now feel with me, that, when he *takes away the desire of our eyes with a stroke* (Ezek. xxiv. 16), our sorrows are too deep to be alleviated by the mere Orator or Philosopher. We even turn in disgust from him, who would thus trifle with our case. We need a support, which the world cannot afford. "I faint," says the wounded soul: "I want an almighty arm to lean on now; yea a very tender and compassionate one too;—one like that of the Son of Man. I need *a merciful and faithful High-Priest, who, having been tempted, knows how to succour the tempted:* (Heb. ii. 17, 18) that Man of sorrows, that Brother born for adversity, who, being *acquainted with grief*, can enter into my case and commune with me in all the peculiarities of my distress. I now need one, who can quiet me on his own breast, and speak to me with his own voice, *Weep not:* the child *is not dead, but sleepeth:* (Luke viii. 52). *Weep not, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest,—when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee:* (Isa. xliii. 2). It is true, this is the land of death; but *I am the resurrection and the life:* (John xi. 25). This is indeed, *a dry and thirsty land, where no water*

* Johnson.

is: (Ps. lxiii. 1) but I will lead you to *fountains of living waters:* I will *wipe away all tears from your eyes:*" (Rev. vii. 17.)

You are ready, perhaps, to say, "*Oh that I knew where I might find him!* But religion has been with me rather a case of necessity, than the high privilege of communing with such a comforter. I feel the misery of living at such a distance from my Heavenly Friend, (especially at this time,) but want liberty to approach nearer. Could I indeed repose on the bosom you just mentioned——' but, alas! my understanding is clouded, my faith weak, sense strong, and Satan busy in filling my thoughts with false notions, difficulties, and doubts respecting a future state and the efficacy of prayer.'* Though I see very gracious proposals made to returning sinners, I tremble to venture. Death itself reminds me of transgression. My thoughts fly every where but to God."

We readily acknowledge, that, among other views of death, it should be regarded as the *wages of sin.* Rom. vi. 23. It is also natural for convinced sinners to tremble before a Judge who charges even angels with folly. However Pride may boast, or Ignorance presume, he, who measures by the standard of a law which is so spiritual as to notice a corrupt desire, will conclude with the Apostle, that *every mouth must be stopped, and all*

* Lady Russell's Letters.

the world become guilty before God: Rom. iii. 19. A view of the divine character, and of his own, led not only a Publican to smite upon his breast as the seat of apostasy and pollution, and cry, *God be merciful to me a sinner* (Luke xviii. 13); but so perfect and upright a man as Job to *abhor himself*, and repent *in dust and ashes:* Job xlii. 6. I may add, that, as *we* become proficients in their school, we shall be more ready to *confess* than to *complain:* we shall learn to justify God, in any instance of his righteous displeasure; and humbly own, that he has laid upon us far less than our iniquities deserve: Ps. ciii. 10.

But, while the Christian, as a penitent, looks upon Him, whom he has pierced, and *mourns;* as a believer, he looks at Him, who was wounded for transgression, and *hopes.* He finds it as desperate to doubt the *remedy*, as to deny the *disorder.* Having formerly rushed headlong with the *presumptuous*, he now fears perishing with the *fearful* and *unbelieving:* Rev. xxi. 8. He sees an atonement of God's own providing: he pleads, upon God's own authority, the merit of that blood, *which cleanseth from all sin:* 1 John i. 7. And, by thus receiving *the record which God gives of his Son, he sets his seal to it that God is true:* John iii. 33.

Is this, my Dear friend, in any degree your case? Fearful, wandering, and wounded as your heart is, does it yet discover a resting-place?

Instead of wishing to evade the charge of "manifold sins and wickedness committed by thought, word, and deed against the Divine Majesty;" is "the remembrance of them grievous, and the burden of them intolerable?" Do you sincerely desire to be freed from this burden, and to enter into *the glorious liberty of the children of God!*—that heavenly communion and rest that has been mentioned? *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!* John i. 29. *Behold him exalted to be a Prince, and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins!* Acts v. 31. Come to him as a sinner; and touch, with humble confidence, but the *hem of his garment*, and you shall be *made whole:* Matt. ix. 21. Wait upon him, and you shall obtain both strength and liberty; *for if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed:* John viii. 36.

Respecting your sense of weakness, let me add, that the *Provision* made for fallen nature, and corresponding to its various wants, is at once a *character* and an *evidence* of our Religion. It is a glorious peculiarity of it, that its *promises* correspond with its *precepts*. To use the language which best conveys its meaning, *The kingdom of God is not in* WORD only, *but* also *in* POWER: 1 Cor. iv. 20. He, who enlightens the blind eyes, undertakes to *strengthen the weak hands, and to confirm the feeble knees:* Isa. xxxv. 3—6. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding is sent to be

also a Spirit of *might*, of *grace*, and of *supplication**. It is peculiar to *our* Teacher, that he *enables*, as well as instructs, his disciples: he first presents a prospect of the inheritance; then, a *title* to it through his death; and, together with these, affords *strength* to rise and pursue it. Turn to the XXXVIth chap. of Ezekiel, and you will find your case amply provided for†: but recollect that it is added, *I will yet for this be enquired of, to do it for them:* Ezek. XXXVI. 37.—*Is any afflicted, let him pray:* James v. 13.

But I must not pass by the temptation which you mentioned respecting the efficacy of prayer. You will, perhaps, too readily object, "Here it is that I sink. I prayed earnestly for the life of the deceased. I thought at one time I saw signs of a recovery: but the event makes me fear that that I was not heard, and that I have no FRIEND left now in Earth or Heaven."

A little consideration will, I hope, shew you your mistake; and prove that a petition may be graciously accepted, when its particular object is not granted. Did not our LORD declare that his Father heard him always? John xi. 42. Are we not told, that when, *in the days of his flesh he had offered up prayers, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, he was* HEARD in that *he feared?* Heb. v. 7. But

* Compare Zech. xii. 10. with Eph. i. 19.
† Ezek. XXXVI. 25—27.

consider, I pray you, how he was heard: certainly not by having the cup *taken away* (a cup at which human nature, however perfect, must recoil) but in being accepted when he prayed; in being supported, while he drank it; and in victoriously accomplishing his grand design, though drinking it to the very dregs.

To come nearer to our own condition, we find St. PAUL going to CHRIST for deliverance from some severe trial, which he calls *a thorn in the flesh*. He tells us that he also was heard; and in the same way as his Master: not by being released from suffering, but by receiving something more honourable and advantageous; namely, that *Grace*, which not only supports a Believer through his trials, but puts a healing virtue into them.

Far removed from the holy resignation of our Master, we too much resemble in our prayers the impatience of our children.—I remember when a sick one of mine had some medicine to take, he called loudly to me to come and assist him against those who were endeavouring to force it down. He probably wondered at my refusing to relieve him; but the little sufferer did not consider, though often told, that he was not to be helped in that way: he did not recollect, that while I tenderly felt his cry, the very compassion I felt for him, and the desire I had to relieve him, kept me from taking away the bitter draught.

The truth is, and it is a truth frequently told

us, that our Heavenly Father always sends his children the things they ask, or better things: he answers their petitions, in *kind*, or in *kindness*. But, while we think only of our *Ease*, he consults our *Profit*. We are urgent about the *Body*: He, about the *Soul*. We call for present *Comfort*: He considers our everlasting *Rest*: and, therefore, when he sends not the very things we ask, he hears us by sending greater *than we can ask or think*: Eph. iii. 20.

Is any, therefore, *afflicted, let him pray*; not only in the public sanctuary, or in the retired closet, but let him consider that there is *a new and living way, consecrated through the vail* (Heb. x. 20) of a Redeemer's human nature, from every scene of retirement or action to a MERCY SEAT; where he *satisfies the longing soul*, and fills the *hungry soul with goodness*; especially of *such as sit in darkness and the shadow of Death*: Ps. cvii. 9, 10. Our very misery and infirmity should, in defect of other preachers, point out the seat of our relief; and direct such frail and depraved creatures to the common Friend of the *weary* and *heavy laden*. Pouring into his bosom all our complaints, we at once obey his command, honour his character, and obtain his assistance: *for we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace,*

that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need: Heb. iv. 15, 16.

Is it not a time of need with you? Endeavour, at his command, to approach, with a holy confidence, for the *supply of all your need according to his riches in glory;* (Phil. iv. 19) and, at this time particularly, for the illumination and comfort of his Holy Spirit. He, whom you supplicate, not only *invites*, but *reasons* with you:—*If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Luke xi. 13.

The religion of education and custom obtains, more or less, every where; but serious, vital, spiritual religion is *a case of necessity* with us all. We summon our forces, we ransack our stores, we *spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not:* Isa. lv. 2. We look every way, and call to every thing; till each, in return, loudly replies, *It is not in me:* Job xxviii. 14. Well, indeed, will it be, if after all our fruitless efforts, we are brought to feel that the provisions of the Gospel are the only *bread* for a hungry soul, the only *balm* for a wounded heart.

However foreign, my Dear Friend, these truths were from your consideration, when we first sat down together, if it shall please him who *commanded the light to shine out of darkness* (2 Cor.

iv. 6), to shine into your heart, and effectually discover the *exceeding riches of his grace* in these provisions; then, though *you* sit weeping over your loss, we are assured from unquestionable authority, that angels are rejoicing* for your unspeakable gain. We are certain also, that not only every *real* friend will cry, "*This day is salvation come to the house* (Luke xix. 9) where we lately wept; but that, drying your tears, you yourself will be compelled to express your grateful sense of the correction you now deplore, and sing, with a companion and fellow proficient in the school of affliction†,

> Father, I bless thy gentle hand:
> How kind was thy chastising rod,
> That forc'd my conscience to a stand,
> And brought my wand'ring soul to God!
>
> Foolish and vain, I went astray
> Ere I had felt thy scourges, Lord:
> I left my guide—I lost my way:
> But now I love and keep thy word.

And, here, suffer me to drop a word or two respecting these

Our COMPANIONS in the House of Mourning. Society is peculiarly pleasant when we are benighted on a journey: and especially that of a citizen of the place to which we are going. It is encouraging to travel with those, who are convinced, that, if *they are chastened of the Lord*, it is, *that they should not be condemned with the*

* Luke xv. 10. † Ps. cxix. 67, 71.

world: 1 Cor. xi. 32. *Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:* Matt. v. 3. Here, they are educating for it. Here, they sit at the foot of the Cross, and receive lessons of faith and patience, of humility and temperance.

Blessed also *are the pure in heart; for they* here *see God:* (Matt. v. 8.) who never so unveils himself as in seasons of distress. In sight of his character and word, they bow before his providence, yea trust him in the stroke; for hope is made to arise here, as a light in darkness. Here the spiritual Husbandman is taught to *go forth weeping, and bearing the precious seed* of faith and love, penitence and prayer! assured *that he shall come again with Joy, bringing his sheaves with him:* Ps. cxxvi. 6. Here also, the heavenly Scholar acquires *the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary:* Isa. l. 4. And here the true Soldier of Jesus Christ is found *fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life* (1 Tim. vi. 12) in the very valley and shadow of death. He is here instructed to *cast down imaginations* (2 Cor. x. 5,) those reasonings which peculiarly infest and darken the House of Mourning; and, taking the *shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit,* he *wrestles not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers:* (Eph. vi. 12—17) — a mighty though secret conflict, which God shall one day declare to the world;

and which, when explained, will leave its most celebrated heroes *silent in darkness:* 1 Sam. ii. 9.

Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock: (Cant. i. 8.) for in this house they all have left the prints of their feet. Here stood Jacob weeping over his beloved Rachel: Gen. xxxv. 20) and here Aaron deplored his sons: (Lev. x. 3). Here we trace the steps of David going up to his chamber, and crying with a loud voice, *Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son! my son!* (2 Sam. xviii. 33.) and those of Ezekiel, who, forbidden to cry, silently resigned the *desire of his eyes* to the stroke: Ezek. xxiv. 16. But enumeration is vain. Hither came all the sons of God, the only-begotten not excepted; for Jesus himself stood *and wept* at the grave of a friend: John xi. 35.

With such company, is it not far *better to go to the House of Mourning than to the House of Feasting?* Eccl. vii. 2.—I knew one of these, *a man who had seen affliction by a rod* (Lam. iii. 1) like yours: a man who walked and wept in solitude, but with no expectation of being overheard. —There is something sacred in grief, and we cannot listen to its effusions with too much candour: great candour, indeed, is here required; but, if afforded, it may procure you at least a *Companion* as you pass through this vale of tears.

. . . . . .

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. . . . . *Set thee up way-marks:* (Jer. xxxi. 21.)—" I desire here to set them up, and to record the severest of my visitations in the house of my pilgrimage. Lord, prepare me for the next.

" I perceive I could not have properly sympathised with a friend in a similar case, before this stroke. I could not have *understood* it.

" I have, at times, so felt the importance of eternal things, that I thought the loss of any present comfort would be tolerable: but I had no idea how much depended on being *ready*, when the Son of Man came in such a providence.

" I feel I now stand in the right position to see the *world* and the *word*. They both appear under aspects entirely new.

" When I find 'my joys pack'd up and gone,' my heart slain, the delight of my eyes taken away: when I recollect who is gone before her, who is following, and what remains for the world to offer; my heart cries, *I loath it: I would not live alway* (Job vii. 16):—I thank God, that *I* am also to go.

" I perceive I did not know how much my life was bound up in the life of a creature. When *she* went, nothing seemed left. One is not; and the rest seem a few thin and scattered remains.

" And, yet, how much better for my lamb to be suddenly housed:—to slip unexpectedly into the fold to which I was conducting her, than remain exposed here! perhaps become a victim!

"I cried, 'O Lord, spare my child!'—He did: but not as I meant. He snatched it from danger, and took it to his own home.

"I have often prayed, 'Lord, soften my heart! humble my pride! destroy my levity!'—I knew enough of his way to fear the *means:* and he has, in mercy towards me, regarded my *soul* more than my *feelings*.

"I prayed earnestly for her life. Duty compelled me to say, *Thy will be done:*—but I *meant* nothing.

"O my God, how long hast thou come *seeking fruit on this tree!* (Luke xiii. 7.) How much hast thou done to cultivate it! Shall it still remain fruitless? Shall it be cut down after all?

"My passions forged impressions that she would live; but I now plainly perceive I am called to regard *God*, and not *impressions*.

"I have been long like one in a fever, attended at times with a strong delirium:—I begged hard that I might not be bled; but he meant a cure, and pierced my heart.

"Oh how slender, how brittle, the thread on which hang all my earthly joys!

"I wish ever to be asking, 'Am I ready, should he send again, and take ***, or ***, or myself?'—*Setting my house in order* (Isa. xxxviii. 1) will not make death approach sooner; but, that it will render his coming much *easier*, I feel by sad experience.

"When I pass by the blaze of dissipation and intemperance, I feel a moment's relief. I say to my heart, 'Be still;'—at least she is not left to follow these *ignes fatui*. How much better is even the grave for my T******, than *the end of those things?* Rom. vi. 21.

"It is vain for me to wish, as I have done, to leave the world, and go to my father, that I might inquire into the whole of the case; the reasons, the steps, the issue, &c. In a short time I shall; but he says enough *now*, if I have ears to hear.

"In the mean time, help me, O my God and Father, to recollect that I received this drop of earthly comfort from a spring which still remains! Help me to feel that nothing *essential* is altered! *for with thee is the fountain of life* (Ps. xxxvi. 9). Part of myself is already gone to thee: help what remains to follow." . . . . . .

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If this humble attempt to improve your affliction has been attended with any success, you will readily admit a few concluding hints with respect to

Our DUTY in such circumstances.

And one of the first and principal duties of the state is, as hath been expressed, to ACKNOWLEDGE GOD in it.

It was charged upon some, that they *returned not to him that smote them*, nor *sought the Lord* in their distress: Isa. ix. 13. On the contrary, the clear apprehension which Job had of a divine hand in his afflictions, is as instructive as his patience under them. While Grief *rent his mantle*, Faith *fell down and worshipped:—The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord:* Job. i. 21. Let us learn from him never to lose sight of the *Author* by an undue regard to the mere *circumstances* of our loss. We may think and speak of the symptoms and stages of the late removal; of the physicians, of the remedies, &c. in their supposed right or wrong application: but not so as to forget that an unerring Providence presided over the whole, yea actually *conducted* every part on reasons as righteous as they are inscrutable.

Whatever may appear to *us* peculiar in the sick chamber, the whole was but God's intended method of removing one, who had lived his *full* (i. e. his *appointed*) time. *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee: thou hast appointed him his bounds which he cannot pass:* Job xiv. 6. Instead of fixing our attention upon means and creatures, of which we know so very little, let us turn to him, who wrought by these instruments, and merely effected his own determinations by them. *Cease from man, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Isa. ii. 22. Let not the

creature hide the Creator, nor present things prove the fatal screen of the future; but, in every occurrence, mark the Great Cause, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things:* Rom. xi. 36.—who numbereth the *very hairs of our head,* and without whom even a *sparrow falls not to the ground:* Matt. x. 29, 30.

While others, therefore, are wandering without an object, and bereaved without a comforter, yea are going to their worst enemy for relief, let us endeavour to say with Peter, "Lord, *to whom shall we go* (John vi. 68) but to THEE?" Consider the Great Physician as now proposing a most serious question to your conscience: *Wilt thou be made whole?* John v. 6. May the language of your heart be that of the Apostle's: *If by* ANY *means!* Phil. iii. 11. Then, though seemingly swallowed up of this grief, like Jonah, you shall find a resource *in* it, and finally be preserved *by* it*. This dart, like that which once pierced an imposthume in battle, shall bring health with its wound: and you shall be enabled, with many who are gone before you, to say, *The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death:* Ps. cxviii. 18.

Duty also directs you to MODERATE YOUR GRIEF.

Our Heavenly Father, who *knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust* (Ps. ciii. 14)

* Jonah ii. 7—10.

allows us to mourn when he afflicts us. He often, in his providence, calls us to it, and charges us to *weep with them that weep:* Rom. xii. 15. But he admonishes us also of a danger on each hand:—*My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord; nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:* Heb. xii. 5. If we seriously profess Christianity, our very profession implies, (not only a subjection to our Lord's will, but) that we have special resources in our affliction: several of which have been already named:——that among other of our privileges, there is *a peace from God which passeth all understanding, to keep our hearts and minds* (Phil. iv. 7) through life and death: and that we have many reasons for *not sorrowing as others who have no hope:* 1 Thess. iv. 13.—Besides which, Christians have a post of honour to maintain: a *high calling* (Phil. iii. 14) to demonstrate and commend. We shall, like the pilot in a storm, be brought to our principles: and, as *sorrowful, yet always rejoicing* (2 Cor. vi. 10), should prove that we have them not now to learn.

On the contrary, there is such a thing as nursing and cherishing our grief: employing a "busy meddling memory to muster up past endearments," and personate a vast variety of tender and heart-rending circumstances. There is a tearing open the wound afresh by images and remembrances; and thereby multiplying those pangs, which constitute the very bitterness of

death itself. Our melancholy exceedingly affects this voluntary torture: it seeks expedients; and will listen to the most unjust and aggravated accusations, which can approach a tender conscience respecting the diseased. But conscience should rather be concerned to repress such a disposition. It is a temptation. It desperately strives to retain what God has determined to remove. In some cases, it seeks to penetrate an abyss, which he forbids even conjecture to explore: and, while it unfits the mourner for the pressing duties of his station, it leads to that *sorrow of the world which worketh death* (2 Cor. vii. 10) to his body, his soul, and his Christian character. How different and superior the sentiments of DAVID! *His servants said unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive: but, when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live: but, now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again?* I SHALL GO TO HIM, BUT HE SHALL NOT RETURN TO ME: 2 Sam. xii. 21—23.

Present circumstances also admonish you to KNOW YOUR OPPORTUNITY; and to improve this season, as peculiarly favourable for spiritual advancement.

There is a *tide* in the concerns of religion: the Scripture calls it the *day of visitation*, and sends us to the *stork* and to the *swallow* for instruction respecting it: Luke xix. 44. Jer. viii. 7. Your heart is now soft, its fascinations withdrawn, and the call loud and affecting: endeavour, therefore, to take the benefit of a remedy which you feel so expensive.

If, in a sense, "smitten Friends are Angels sent on errands full of love," instead of weeping over their tombs, let us listen to the voice which properly arises from them; especially if it be our privilege to bury one, who, like Abel, *being dead yet speaketh* (Heb. xi. 4), and who would be ready to say to his mourners, "*Weep not for me, but for yourselves, and for your children* (Luke xxiii. 28). *I have fought the good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith* (2 Tim. iv. 7), and received my crown. I cannot now come to weep with you, but you may ascend and rejoice with me, where there is *no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away:* (Rev. xxi. 4.) If you truly love me, prepare to follow me. If you earnestly wish to see me again, seek not the living among the dead, but arise and become *a follower of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises:* Heb. vi. 12. Take that heavenly lamp which *shineth as a light in a dark place*: walk humbly by it, *till the day dawn, and the day star arise in your heart* (2 Pet. i. 19).

—Haste, my beloved, towards the things which *eye hath not seen* (1 Cor. ii. 9); and, ere the eternal day break, and the present shadows flee away, *run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus* (Heb. xii. 1, 2). How will my cup overflow to meet you among those who daily *come hither out of great tribulation;* and, having *washed their robes in the blood of the lamb, serve him day and night in his temple!*" Rev. vii. 14, 15.

Embrace every method which God hath recommended for maintaining communion with him, and obtaining relief from him:—the various ordinances of his House; the encouragements of his Word; the society of his Children; and especially, Prayer. Often speak to him who *seeth in secret,* and *is nigh unto all that call upon him,* though, with the Woman of Canaan, you can only say, *Lord help me:* Matt. vi. 18. Ps. cxlv. 18. Matt. xv. 25. Not only a high commendation, but a miracle followed her request. She urged it under the greatest discouragements, but you have both a command and a promise: *Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me:* Ps. l. 15.

And, while you search the Scriptures, and attend the Church, you will at once be instructed and encouraged by marking, in both, those footsteps which we lately considered. They are indeed, not so explicit in the latter; but attention to the scriptural account of the Christian character,

To recover our alienated minds, and gain our confidence, God meets us in a way suited to our necessities and to our fears. Resist, as the vilest temptation, any doubt of that *Good-will to Man* which was sung at the Redeemer's birth. What hath God not done in order to commend his love? By every expression of tender concern, he, in the person of a *Man of Sorrows*, invites the guilty, the weary, the trembling, and the tempted, to come unto him; assuring them that he will neither *break the bruised reed*, nor *quench the smoaking flax:* Matt. xii. 20.

If *God is love* (1 John iv. 16), "Christ is God, stooping to the senses, and speaking to the heart of man:" ever saying, "Look to my Cross, take my Yoke, and lean upon my Arm, and ye shall find rest." He sought the House of Mourning to comfort the sisters of Lazarus: he met a widow following her only child, and *when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not:* Luke vii. 13. May he meet you at this time, my Dear Friend, with consolations which none but himself can afford! and then, at the very grave, shall *that saying be brought to pass, Death is swallowed up in victory:* 1 Cor. xv. 54. Let such fear as despise our heavenly *Friend*, our *Prospects*, *Provisions*, *Companions*, and sense of *Duty*. God with us, and all things in God, is light in darkness, life in death. The words, which revived him, who stiles himself *your brother and*

companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ (Rev. i. 9) remain to cheer a solitude darker, if possible, than his: *Fear not: I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hell and of death:* Rev. i. 17, 18.

To conclude: the late event solemnly repeats its author's charge, BE YE ALSO READY: Matt. xxiv. 44.

Your friend is gone: your following is certain: it may be sudden: it may be next. But, should it take place this night, and find you provided with nothing better for the change than the miserable subterfuges of the profane, or the scarcely less miserable supports of the formal, what an alarm (if you are not left to the most affecting delusion or stupidity) will it occasion! What an awful transition, to pass from the SAVIOUR to the JUDGE! without love to him; without even an acquaintance with him: unwilling, unreconciled, unrenewed!—and to him, who has so often invited you, warned you, and, at times, affected your conscience with the truths which we have been considering! What a subject for eternal reflection. *You would not come to him that you might have life:* John v. 40.

God forbid, however, that this should be *your* case! I only suppose it, lest it should: and it is too common to render the supposition improper.

From such a danger we cannot be too secure; and, therefore, having lately seen how soon *the night cometh when no man can work* (John ix. 4), let us seek *to-day*, in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that peace and safety, which you must be conscious can never be found out of it, and which it may be too late to seek to-morrow.

Some things belonging to our important change are wisely hid from us. Nothing, however, is more plain than that it is *near*; and, therefore, demands our most serious attention: that it is finally *decisive* (Matt. xxv. 46); and, therefore, warns us to watch against those errors which eternity cannot rectify: and, that the hour is *uncertain*; and, therefore, calls us to stand prepared. With our *loins girded*, and our *lights burning*, may we thus wait for our Lord.

Impressed with such views, I have often wished to take the afflicted by the hand, and lead them to a Resource which their passions have obscured. I have wished them to see that the Christian Hope is then most alive and full of immortality, when every other hope perishes. These wishes, and the request of a friend, (who was solicitous to obtain something of this kind more compendious than he had yet seen) have drawn from me some imperfect hints. Imperfect, however, as they are, like a few words, presented by the road's side to the eye of a weary traveller,

they may afford you some present direction and relief. And should he, who is pleased to employ the feeblest means in his greatest work, conduct you by them (though but a single step on your way) towards a *Morning without clouds*——a *House* without *mourning*,—the service of your affectionate friend will obtain a high reward.

FRIENDLY ADVICE,

FROM

A MINISTER

TO THE

SERVANTS OF HIS PARISH.

He, that hearkeneth unto counsel, is wise.—Prov. xii. 15.

FRIENDLY ADVICE,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Author of this Address calls himself your FRIEND, because he wishes you well, and would serve you to the utmost of his power. If he has not silver and gold, such as he has he freely gives. He has been taught himself, that there are truths more valuable than either; and he would fain teach you the same: *For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence; but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth* LIFE *to them that have it:* Eccl. vii. 12.

I have an easy access to many of those whom you serve; and can remind them of their duty privately, as well as from the pulpit: but some of their servants I have no opportunity of conversing with; and therefore have composed the present little Tract for your use.

A minister, who rightly regards his situation, feels an affection for every class of his people: as

the spiritual parent of a large family, he has a concern for every part of it; and, as the servant of Him who made himself the servant of all, he cannot overlook those who have a name so like his own.

But the service I am endeavouring to render you, will very much depend upon your being *willing* to be served. There are minds in so unhappy a state, that nothing serious nor important can gain their attention. If they read at all, they either amuse themselves with trifles, or poison themselves with trash. Such will, probably, throw away this tract in contempt, if it should fall into their hands. Should it, however, fall into the hand of one more thoughtful, I will endeavour that he shall be repaid for looking it over.

I have been often encouraged, when, from the pulpit, I have met a servant's attentive eye; or when I have seen him listening to a profitable remark while waiting in the parlour. I have been pleased to meet them at a bookseller's, inquiring for some instructive publication; and have been ready to say upon such occasions, *Happy is the man,* whatever be his station, *that getteth understanding,* for *she is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her:* Prov. iii. 13, 18.

The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men that can render a reason (Prov. xxvi. 16); but the man of understanding will think and listen. He will seriously consider the shortness of life,

and how stupid and brutish it is to waste it without improvement: much more so to sink it in folly, sensuality, and vice; and, instead of making provision for a happy immortality, only lay the ground for bitter repentance.

Thinking persons, I say, cannot but feel the weight of these considerations; and, accordingly, they will listen to such hints as they meet with on the subject, and they will improve as they listen. In this temper and in this way, some of the first characters for usefulness and respectability have arisen from among servants; agreeably to that Scripture, *A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren:* Prov. xvii. 2.

Turn your mind, therefore, to such instruction as Providence shall please to afford you, in this or in any other way. It is from a small seed dropped into the ground, that the most useful and ornamental productions of the field and garden arise; and a single hint has given rise to a train of thoughts, which has formed a new character among men.

And here let me add a caution: namely, That you should be careful not to slight any truth, because some weak person may happen to hold it, or some bad character may chance to defend it; or because it may be spoken to you in a wrong temper, or at an improper season. It is possible that these very hints may be put into your hand

in a way which tends to lessen their good effect: but recollect, that a guinea is exactly of the same value to you in whatever way it is presented. Regardless of the mind of the giver, you would say, "Gold is gold." Now, I only ask, that you would, in the same way, reflect that truth is truth!—and that truth will serve you where gold cannot: *Buy* thou, therefore, *the truth, and sell it not* (Prov. xxiii. 23) on any account whatever. Stand by it, and it will stand by thee; for it is *great*, and shall *prevail.*

CHAPTER II.

THE SERVANT'S INTEREST.

An all-wise Providence has appointed different stations, and made them dependent on one another; so that the EYE *cannot say to the* HAND, *I have no need of thee:* 1 Cor. xii. 21. It has also made the happiness of each member to depend on the regular performance of its own particular office; so that the *eye*, while it directs the *hand*, shall, in return, receive protection from it. By this mutual dependence it is intended, *that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another:* 1 Cor. xii. 25.

Whatever, therefore, you meet with in this Tract, which treats of what you owe to the hap-

piness of your employers, is by no means to be understood as if the payment would lessen your own stock of happiness. I mean to shew rather, that your interests are mutual; and that what promotes your Master's comfort, as truly increases your own. A fatherly regard to your true interest ought never to be forgotten, either by your Minister or Master? both are bound to remember, that *they* also have a Master in Heaven, who has commanded them *to love their neighbour as themselves* (Matt. xxii. 39); and to *give unto their servants that which is just and equal:* Col. iv. 1.

It is *just* and *equal*, then, that faithful service should meet with suitable protection and encouragement. Neither the laws of God nor man forbid your prudently seeking relief under want, excessive labour, or injuries of any kind. You are justified in quitting a place in which you cannot enjoy health, nor obtain reasonable support and comfort. But prudence requires you to be cautious how you change your place, merely for the sake of greater wages. Many a servant has sold health, comfort, and character, yea the safety also of body and soul, for a paltry consideration in money: and learned too late, that one place, with small wages, is often better, all things considered, than another with large.

Much less let a hasty word or momentary vexation throw you out of place. This is acting

more like a passionate child than a man. Whatever you do in a passion, you will repent of doing. It is always *folly*,—often *madness*. "No government," says an able writer, "could subsist for a day, if single errors could justify defection:" and we may add, That such as throw up their posts for an error's sake, will probably spend their lives in smarting for their rashness.

In wishing to change your place, you should recollect that every change will bring with it its own inconveniences and difficulties; and some, of which you have no suspicion till you feel them. It is childish to form high expectations of a new thing. People of experience expect but little from the most flattering prospects and proposals. Sin, like a blight, has entered every place, and withered the most pleasant of its fruits and flowers. If good men (like Aaron, Eli, and David) are obliged to lament that their *house is not so with God* (2 Sam. xxiii. 5) as they wish and earnestly pray for, what can we expect from the generality of houses?

You should also never forget that we carry the greatest part of the trouble we complain of in our own bosoms. When we wish a change, we for the most part, are like sick persons, who imagine, that if they could change sides in their bed they should be easier: they turn, but they are still uneasy: and why? because they are still sick. This life was never intended to be the rest of either

master or servant: both have their burdens; and the master's is oftentimes the heavier of the two.

The dutiful and pious conduct of some servants towards their indigent relations should not be forgotten. I have seen a daughter willing to wear mean clothes, that her aged mother might have some to wear. I have also seen such conduct blessed with distinguished favour. *Honour*, therefore, *thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee:* Eph. vi. 2, 3.

As reputation in general is that which gives weight and influence to any man, so the reputation of servants is peculiarly *their* strength. A servant with health and character is provided for. *A good name is better than precious ointment:* Eccl. vii. 1. A silent steadiness, a tried integrity and diligence, are so essential to the interests of mankind, that no master can be insensible to their value. Be assured, that the wealthiest and the happiest are so needy, in this respect, that such service must always bear a high price.

Let nothing, therefore, base or false, rob you of that precious jewel, your reputation. Be honest, diligent, and civil, if it be only out of respect to yourself. Who is not struck with the answer of that slave which history records, who, standing among others for sale, and being asked by a purchaser, "Wilt thou be faithful, if I buy thee?" replied, "Yes, whether you buy me or not!"

But character, especially among females (to whom I now speak) is easily blasted, so as to be irrecoverably lost. If any consideration can lessen the crime of the villain who attempts to strip you of it, it must be that of his not considering the depth of ruin into which he would plunge you. Should he, however, be cruel enough to neglect the consideration, surely you will not forget, that want of reputation, and the despair which attends it, fill our streets with prostitutes; murdering, at once, both body and soul. Depend upon it, that he, who would dishonour you, has no sincere affection for you; and the moment you suffer him to pass the bounds of the strictest decorum, he must lose even his *respect* for you;—that very respect, upon which alone a true and constant regard is built.

Your safety partly consists in being aware of your danger. Detect Ruin in its first approaches. Understand its smiling aspect and plausible pretence. Particularly avoid dangerous occasions, and whatever you find likely to deprive you of your resolution. They have made but little observation on their own hearts, who have not learned how weak their reason and resolution are, in the moment of temptation: and, therefore, that their safety lies in making a *timely* escape; that is to say, an *immediate* one.

To speak more generally—Bad company is so mischievous, that when a young servant is observed

to be entering into it, every person of compassion and discernment recoils at the sight, as at seeing a sheep enter the slaughter-house. Who, that has seen anything of life, does not know the mischief of a vicious conversation and example? What will not an unprincipled tongue dare to assert? What so sacred that does not serve it for a jest? What character or service will it not teach others to despise? What corrupt maxim or vain project will it not recommend? I have known a short conversation quite unhinge a sober mind. I have observed a few hints plant disorder and wretchedness in a once contented breast, that could never afterwards be rooted out. I have even been surprised to find how soon a bad example would transform one that has been long humble, diligent, and conscientious, into the very reverse. In a word, such a tongue is, indeed *an unruly evil*, and *full of deadly poison* (James iii. 8); and the danger is the greater, because the poison is often mixed with something curious and entertaining, or is presented under the notion of friendship. The venom, thus sweetened, creeps into the heart before even its danger is suspected: but beware of this deadly cup as you prize your safety: the more pleasing you find it, the more dangerous it is. The best advice here is, that which comes from the highest authority: *Avoid it: pass not by it: turn from it, and pass away:* Prov. iv. 15.

I think I ought not to omit warning you of the

snare which attends *gaming*, or adventuring in lotteries. Covetousness lies at the root of it; and a discontent with that provision, which God hath already made for us. It is He, who has placed us in our different stations, and bids each to *take heed and beware of covetousness* (Luke xii. 15), and to depend for our support upon him who clothes the lilies and feeds the birds: and far from encouraging a man in those crooked paths which lead to wasting, and sometimes to stealing, he charges him to *labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give* (even though he is but a labourer) *to him that needeth:* Eph. iv. 28.

Many honest and prosperous servants, led away by the puffing proposals of gain which are every where to be met with, would think a real friend was romancing, if he should give them an account of the distresses, frauds, lies, and other desperate steps to which such projects often lead; and which sometimes end, not only in the loss of character, but even of life. Such an account, I say, might surprise those who know but little of the world, and the effect of its gilded baits; but is this account anything more than what has actually happened again and again? And, if we often *hear* of such things, how many more evils of this sort may we reasonably suppose there are of which we never hear! But it is with *gaming*, as with most other bad habits: it advances a step at a time.

The first step is thought to be innocent and safe: the next is not considered as very dangerous: the third, however dangerous, is yet deemed, in present circumstances, absolutely necessary; till, at length, the deluded adventurer awakes, as from a dream, to reflect (but too late) upon his folly and his ruin.

If I have said nothing of *swearing*, *drunkenness*, *indecency*, *violence*, &c. it is merely because such vices are too gross and scandalous to need exposing in such a Tract as this. Who, that commits these crimes, does not, upon reflection feel ashamed of them? There are, however, some considerations at the end of the book, to which such an unhappy character would do well to take heed, before it is too late: for *He, that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed! and that, without remedy:* Prov. xxix. 1.

I AM obliged now to turn from considerations which more particularly relate to your private concerns, to those which belong to your engagement.

But, before we enter upon the next chapter, let us seriously resolve to seek His blessing upon these Hints, "from whom," as our Church expresses it, "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed"—"that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without him, may by him be enabled to live according to his will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

CHAPTER III.

A MASTER'S REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS.

He, who foresaw the infinite variety of disputable cases which would arise, and which no body of laws, however extensive, could reach, when "he visited us in great humility," left a rule so comprehensive, that it may be applied to every case; and at the same time so easy, that the meanest capacity may apply it:—

> *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets:* Matt. vii. 12.

As our claim upon others depends so much upon our *rendering to all their dues* (Rom. xiii. 7) —as *tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear,* and *honour to whom honour*—it is my duty to state to you some of those services, which those with whom you live have a right to claim.

And, as the first step to our rightly performing our part, is, to *know* it, I shall select the rule above mentioned as our *measuring rod.* I shall put this standard into your own hand; and observe that, in order to your using it, you have only to suppose that Providence had appointed you to *govern* instead of to serve: you will then perceive

what you would reasonably have claimed from those servants over whom you were placed.

Would you not expect, while you fulfilled your engagements with them, that they should also fulfil their engagements with you; namely, to yield you both faithful and *cheerful* service? bearing with those infirmities in you which are common to human nature? Would you not expect them to be honest, not only in larger matters, but that they should not watch opportunities to purloin in *smaller?* Would you deem it upright, if they listened to your *private conversation?*—if they examined your *private papers?*—if they wasted or made away with your substance, or your *time?* In a word, would you not say, "Real honesty will do nothing which fears a discovery; or which needs secret opportunities, or concealments?"

For a master as much pays his servant for *time* and *care*, as his tradesmen for goods; and, while his property is liable to be attacked in a variety of ways, he employs servants, like so many watchmen, to defend it. But how hard would you deem it to be betrayed by your guards!—to have the very staff upon which you leaned, not only fail, but pierce you!—to have a servant idle, when you particularly needed his activity; and wasting that, which is often provided with difficulty! How would you feel his carelessness, when much depended on his care! and, if he were at the same time too proud and impatient to

receive either reproof or instruction! With what grief would you observe him choosing the very connections which you had forbidden!—forming a separate interest, yea, a sort of conspiracy against you and your family, and seeking wretched pretences to justify absolute injuries! I cannot doubt but that you would propose your rule, as an end to all debate. You would bid him honestly ask his own heart, how *he* would like such treatment!

The same may be said of the abuse of horses: not to mention the baseness of ill-treating a generous creature, which cannot complain; and which, while it stands patient under repeated injuries, stands also ready to strain every nerve to please his cruel abuser. How would you feel if *your* servant thus treated a horse which you valued? Let such an abuser also ask himself, How *he* would feel to live constantly under the lash of an unfeeling tyrant, who either has no meaning in his abuse, or who takes no pains to make his meaning understood?—under one, who may have anything done by gentle methods, but who makes choice of cruel ones?—and one, who, by repeating his cruelties, has so hardened himself, that it becomes difficult to convince him that he is cruel?

Again: Would you not expect, while your property was secured, and your interest consulted in other respects, that the character of yourself and your family should be equally secure? Apply

the rule again, and inquire, What *you* would think of a servant who scrupled not to expose your weakness to any one who would be mean enough to hear the tale. What would you say to those, who collected and retailed every fault or misfortune in your family; especially when mis-stated, and presented only on the unfavourable side? I am persuaded that their taking away your purse would not leave so unfavourable an impression upon your mind.

I have said nothing here of inventing absolute falsehoods, because I am not speaking to the abandoned, but to the *inconsiderate*:—to such, as do not consider that to speak only half the truth is often a lie; and that the truth itself may be so injurious, that nothing can justify its being spoken, but when greater injuries must follow upon your silence.

Once more: You would not only require your servant to be honest, sober, and careful of your property, interest, and character; but you would reasonably expect attention as to the *manner* of your being served. You must be conscious how much satisfaction depends upon the spirit and temper of the person serving, and how very offensively a command may be obeyed: insomuch, that obedience in the *act*, may be accompanied with perfect rebellion in the *manner*. You know, if *you* receive assistance in a sullen, careless, or impertinent way, you would rather be without

such service. You must also be sensible, that if every trifle be made a subject of debate or contention, no family can be at peace. Providence has appointed some to govern, and others to serve, as different members of the same body; and when this order is not cheerfully submitted to, there must ensue strife, confusion, and every evil work.

Thus I have mentioned some instances as examples of trying the rule or standard of right; but innumerable instances beside these might be mentioned, and will daily arise, to which the rule is equally applicable. If, therefore, vicious companions attempt to make wrong appear right, or to think very little of the wrong, recollect you have a rule at hand which will exactly suit the case, and easily determine what is your duty; for no wrong conduct in others can possibly excuse what is wrong in us.

A considerate master will not, indeed, rigorously exact his claims: he will know human nature too well to expect more than imperfect service from imperfect creatures. The errors which he marks in his own course, the passions which disturb his own bosom, and the *ten thousand talents* which he hereby owes to his Lord, will teach him to avoid so great a mistake as that of angrily *taking his servant by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest!* Matt. xviii. 28. But the more generously he refrains from *demanding*

all his due, the more ready should you be to *pay* it: yea, with a generosity like his own, exact it from yourself; and, depend upon it, that if you possess such real worth, sooner or later your worth will be felt and acknowledged, however low your present situation or discouraging your prospects.

CHAPTER IV.

FELLOW-SERVANTS.

I COME in this chapter to drop a few hints respecting the temper you should cultivate towards your *Fellow-Servants*: and your living well with them, depends much upon the regard you pay to the same general rule, of *doing as you would be done by*.

The jealousies and animosities, which arise from the merest trifle, and throw a large family into confusion and party rage, are scarcely to be conceived by those who have not seen them: like a single spark, which, struck by accident, and falling upon combustible matter, will lay a whole town in ashes. In order, therefore, to live in peace, you must not only be peaceably disposed, but, as the Apostle expresses it, you must *seek peace and pursue it*: 1 Pet. iii. 11. That is, as men pursue an object upon which their heart is set. Often have we heard complaints stated with plausibility by one party; and thought the injury

very great, till the other side was heard. If, therefore, you suppose (which is very common) that the grievance lies chiefly, if not entirely, with your fellow-servant, put yourself in his place; and you will, perhaps, begin to discover your mistake.

Let me particularly exhort you to make an ingenuous confession of error as soon as you discover it. Never think you degrade yourself by taking the side of Truth, whenever or with whomsoever it appears. You never pretended to be infallible: why then be so backward to acknowledge an error? To convince my adversary, is gaining a victory over *him:* but, to confess my mistake, is to gain one over *myself.* In a word, it is often the only method left us of doing away a fault: it is the way to rise by a fall: it is an opportunity of seizing the approbation of another's mind: it silences his future blame, and often overcomes evil with good.

History mentions an exemplary character, who went to his enemy, and said, "Shall we never be reconciled till we become a table-talk to all the country?" And, when his enemy agreed to reconciliation, "Remember," said he, "that though I was both elder and the superior, I sought first to thee!" "True," replied the other, "I every way feel my inferiority? for I began the quarrel, and thou the reconciliation.

One of the worst characters that enters a house is *the whisperer, which separateth chief friends:*

Prov. xvi. 28. But, I pray you, understand me here. By a whisperer, I cannot mean one, who feels himself bound to give notice of wrongs which he cannot otherwise prevent. No! I mean a wanton or malicious sower of strife. I hope you will consider the injustice and cruelty of such a practice: and recollect, than no one despises the tale-bearer, more that those who listen to the tale; and that *with what measure ye mete, it will,* in one way or other, *be measured to you again*: Matt. vii. 2.

In a word, whether we regard masters or servants, we live in a world which has so many sharp points and critical stations, that our own comfort, as well as that of those with whom we live, is made to turn upon mutual kindness, forbearance, accommodation, and dependence: in want of these, we are condemned to bear the lash of continual discord, and are made our own tormentors. The least consideration will inform us how easy it is to put an ill-natured construction upon a word; and what perverse turns and expressions spring from an evil temper. Nothing can be explained to him who will not understand, nor will anything appear right to the unreasonable. "Every thing in life," says one of the ancients, "has two handles;" but it must be a bad disposition indeed, which will be ever seizing the wrong one.

I therefore repeat it, That if you would *have* comfort, you must *give* it. It is no uncommon

thing to hear the very persons, who throw a family into confusion, complain that there is no peace in the family: but he, that would escape the calamity of fire, must be careful not to strike the sparks which enkindle it.

The only remedy for all these evils is true religion. This, so far as it is embraced, brings *glory to God, peace on earth, and good-will towards men:* Luke ii. 14. The slightest acquaintance with the doctrine and example of our Saviour, must convince every unprejudiced mind of their holy and heavenly tendency: and the *tendency* of this religion is a sufficient proof that it came from Heaven, and leads to it again; if no other proof could be given.

From whence come wars and fightings among us, but from the want of that mind which our Master possessed and recommended? Such a mind would put an end to those bickerings and jealousies, which render families so wretched. Christianity teaches us to suffer ills, not to inflict them; and to give *good measure and running over*, rather than nicely to consider what was *agreed* for.

But, whatever price we pay for peace, it must never be purchased at the expense of *Truth*. The quiet of some persons is little more than a state of confederacy, or agreement in wrong sentiments and bad practices. As it is my duty to warn you of whatever is wrong in general, let me add, that

there is nothing wrong in the character of man, which a serious reader of his Bible will not find described, together with its danger and remedy.

Let me also remind you to value and improve your *time;* for, as somebody has observed, "It is with our time as with our money, a good husband makes a little go a great way!" Spare minutes taken care of, turn to great account at the year's end! Waste not then the leisure you have (especially on the Sunday) in so wretched and unprofitable a manner as many do; but gather up your fragments of time for present improvement and eternal happiness; and endeavour, in improving opportunities, to imitate a great character of former times, who, when almost expiring, hearing some persons discoursing in a low tone of voice, said, "Speak out, that I may learn something more before I die."

CHAPTER V.

RELIGION.

I HAVE hitherto spoken principally on those subjects which relate to your comfort and character in this world. I should, however, perform but a small part of my duty, and but ill fulfil the profession of a friend, were I to confine my advice only to the present moment. To give a man directions for travelling *comfortably* is worth something;

but how insufficient will this be, if we neglect to point out the *right road* in which he is to travel! Even a rough and dreary way, which leads to our Father's house, is far better than a smooth and pleasant path, which leads to the abode of an enemy.

I come, therefore, to speak on the subject of that Religion which I mentioned at the conclusion of the last chapter; and which is no other than a state of friendship with God: which raises a high and lively expectation in our hearts on the security of his own truth: which brings present *life and peace* (Rom. viii. 6); and, like a river refreshes and fertilizes every place through which it flows.

Religion, moreover, particularly invites your regard, as it is a blessing common to the rich and poor. "It is at church that the poor man lifts up his head." Providence has appointed many distinctions in other things, all which a Christian is satisfied with on this very account, that as they are but transient in themselves, so they are appointed of God for wise purposes; but, in the grand and eternal concern, you have the same privileges and promises which are proposed to your master. For, as the natural Sun shines into the room of the meanest servant with the same splendour and warmth as into the master's, so the *Sun of Righteousness* ariseth, without any respect of persons, upon their hearts.

Lest, however, you should fall into the more

common mistakes about our religion; or lest you should be led away by any dangerous heresy of the day, and make shipwreck of that faith for which our reformers so earnestly strove and so willingly bled; I intreat your attention while I discourse further on a subject, which, in its importance, infinitely exceeds every other: *For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal:* 2 Cor. iv. 18.

Christianity, then, is more than a reputable *profession*, a just *notion*, or a regular *form*, however valuable these may be in themselves: to mistake it for these, is like mistaking an image for a man, or the *shadow* of any thing for the thing itself. It is more than an *outward reformation*: for this is but lopping off the branches of a bad tree, while the root remains to shoot afresh.

It is also more than *doing our duty towards one another*: for to stop here, would be like regarding your fellow-servants while you forgot your Master. Yea, we shall fall short of our mark, if we only regard what we are to *do for our great* MASTER *himself*; since the Gospel principally discovers what *he hath done* for us: and this discovery is declared to be of such importance, that our eternal state depends upon the regard we pay to it: Mark xvi. 15, 16. If, indeed, our religion were not more than some moralists teach, the figurative atonements made before Christ came, and the *real* one made by him on the cross, would not

only be an immense, but unnecessary expense; and the promise of a *Divine Spirit* and a *new heart* (Ezek. xxxvi. 26) unaccountable. On the other hand, the cross of Christ, and the promise of his Spirit, point out the depth of that misery into which sin has plunged us. They show, that *without shedding of blood* there *is no remission* (Heb. ix. 22); and that, without such a repentance or change of mind takes place in the sinner, as may be compared to his being *born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:* John iii. 3.

To speak as plainly as I can on such a subject, Christianity sets forth the benefits which fallen creatures derive from a Redeemer, who is no less than *God manifest in the flesh* (1 Tim. iii. 16); and these benefits consist in that which he wrought FOR them, and that which he works IN them. At the same time it discovers, that *without him, they can do nothing* for themselves: John xv. 5.

Who, in this respect, *hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* For us, if indeed we are his disciples, he *grew up as a tender plant:* for us *he was despised and rejected of men:* and, after speaking to our case as man never spake, and performing such wonders as man never wrought, *our iniquity was laid upon him*, and *he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter.* There, *for us men, and for our salvation, it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for sin:* Isa. liii. 1—10. *For us* also *he*

gave himself (Titus ii. 14); and *bare our sins in his own body on the tree* (1 Pet. ii. 24);—*the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God* (iii. 18); and, having *died* for us, for us also he *rose, leading Captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men:* Eph. iv. 8. But it was not only *for us* that he did this: he also sends these purchased gifts *into* our hearts. It is *in us* that he sets up his *kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost:* Rom. xiv. 17. It is *in us* that he works repentance, faith, hope, and love; and all those genuine *fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God:* Phil. i. 11. This is that *life of God in the soul of man,* which is the earnest and foretaste of life eternal: and this our Lord has taught us to expect, that we shall as really and actually derive from himself, and receive *into* our hearts, as the *branch* really and actually receives life, sap, or nourishment from the *vine,* to which it is united: John xv. 4.

As he sat on the well, discoursing with a woman of Samaria, he taught the same truth by another figure, when he said, *If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up*

into everlasting life: John iv. 10. 13, 14. Accordingly, in the great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and again proclaimed his best gift; and promised to every thirsty soul a spring of divine and eternal life, derived indeed from himself, but to spring up in the heart of the believer: and, lest his meaning should not be comprehended by every one, the Evangelist adds, *This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him shall receive*: John vii. 37—39.

Thus securing us from all we *fear*, and supplying us with all we *need*, he becomes completely our SAVIOUR.

Let me further hint, that, by attending to these principles, you will be enabled to detect the more plausible errors which you meet with. Examine, when a doctrine is presented, whether it does not tend to oppose, or *to explain away* one or other of these two branches of Christianity: either what Christ does *for* the sinner, by the merit of his blood; or what he does *in* the sinner, by the power of his Spirit.

I cannot, indeed, in a few words, convey a more plain and scriptural account of these truths, than in the following short extract from the Articles of the Church of England, which maintain, That "there is a fault and corruption in the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of *Adam:* whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own

nature inclined to evil." Art. ix. It is further declared, That, "the condition of man, after the fall of *Adam*, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God; having no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without his grace." Art. x. Do you ask, "Upon what foundation can we now stand before God?" The answer is, Upon that only which he himself hath laid; for *we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith; and not for our own works and deservings.* Art. xi. Do you further ask, "Of what value then are these works of ours, since they cannot justify us before God?" The Church well replies, "Albeit, that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ; and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch, that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit." Art. xii.

If this be Christianity, let the reader stop and inquire what he knows of it. Let him seriously reflect on the course of his life; on his views and his hopes: that is, let him honestly examine his heart, and consider whether he has not been hitherto wandering far from the ways and counsel

of God. Undone, as we must be, till we find out our condition as transgressors of a holy law, and discover a hope of mercy, *through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*, yet with what unconcern are these great points treated? Though we naturally wander like lost sheep, who among us has actually returned to *the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls?* And yet, strange to say, who does not expect to be considered as a Christian? *Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest be thus mindful of him?*—and, What is man, that he should be so unmindful of thee and of himself?

For full satisfaction on these and less important points in religion, search the Scriptures. It is our Lord's own direction (John v. 39); and it is recorded, to the honour of some people at Berea, that they were *more noble* than those in Thessalonica, not only in *that they received the* word *with all readiness of mind;* but that, instead of listening to senseless prejudice and rash opposition, like their neighbours, *they searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so:* Acts xvii. 11. Let me intreat you to imitate the nobler mind of this ingenuous people, especially as your Bible contains not only these leading truths, but a variety of examples, directions, and encouragements, connected with them. It not only leads, but animates: it not only discovers, but supports; and, therefore, is to be the constant *lamp to your feet, and light to your paths* (Ps. cxix. 105)—

the staff upon which you are to lean every step of your way.

My design in mentioning these truths, is to remind the members of our Church of their principles; to place the feet of the inexperienced in the ancient track, and to put them upon their guard. For want of caution, and some assistance at first setting out, well-meaning people have been miserably perplexed and discouraged in their course, or drawn aside by seducers: for *while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares;* Matt. xiii. 25.

CHAPTER VI.

PREJUDICES.

FROM what has been stated, it plainly appears that Religion is a lively tree, bearing heavenly fruits; *the planting of the Lord, in which he will be glorified:* Isa, lxi. 3:—his noblest and most expensive work. It is no wonder, then, that the great adversary of God and man should be ever raising prejudices against it: not indeed against the *form,* but against the *power* of godliness. Among other objections which I have not room to mention, none is more common than that which represents serious religion as the death of *happiness* and the grave of *business;* and of this, you will not fail to have certain instances pointed out as proofs.

But those instances are impositions. They are not the effects of true religion, but of the reverse: *for the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance:* Gal. v. 22, 23. Are these terms for wretchedness? or, are these fruits likely to produce it?

A penitent, indeed, like the *jailor*, may, upon being awakened to a sense of his danger, express this sense with terror, and anxiously cry out, *What must I do to be saved?* Acts xvi. 30. And a backslider, like *Peter*, cut to the heart with a sense of his ingratitude, may, for a while, seek a retreat where he may go aside to *weep bitterly*. There is a season of correction, *a time to mourn* (Eccl. iii. 4), which, like a dark cloud to the husbandman, is generally followed by a fruitful season. What wisdom would there have been in any of us, if we had never known sorrow?—but, though such a *weeping endureth for a night, joy cometh in the morning:* Ps. xxx. 5. A true, solid, abiding satisfaction! liable, indeed, like every thing below, to interruptions; but such as a man feels upon the recovery of his health, through a salutary though painful course of medicine. No one ever deemed such an one *unhappy*, because he underwent some pain in order to a sound cure.

A Christian of a peevish or melancholy turn may be found; but, like a tree without its proper

fruit, though he may be alive, he is not well. We are not allowed to call him a *dead* or *bad* tree, because he does not flourish for the present season; but, for the same reason, we cannot say he is a healthy one: or, in another view, such a Christian is yet a *child*, and therefore imperfect in measure: he is also at school, and has not thoroughly learned his lesson.

True religion is the life, health, and education of the soul; and whoever truly possesses it, is strengthened with peculiar encouragement for every good word and work. Surely, if anything can warm and animate the heart of man, and enable him to bear up under difficulties, it must be an assurance that *the eternal God is his refuge*, and that *the everlasting arms are underneath him:* Deut. xxxiii. 27. that *all things shall work together for his good:* Rom. vii. 28. and that his *light affliction, which is but for a moment, shall work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Admitting that other men have their hopes and joys, can they be compared with these? *Their* comforts depend upon their *corn, and wine* and *oil increasing:* but a believer can say, *Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, and the labour of the olive shall fail; yet I will rejoice in the Lord: I will joy in the God of my salvation:* Hab. iii. 17, 18.

I intreat you, therefore, henceforward to con-

sider religion as the true spring of solid happiness: it consistently bids its disciples to *rejoice alway* (Phil. iv. 4); because it affords them matter for rejoicing under the loss of all things;—"in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment!"

As to the article of *business*, for what is not a religious man prepared, to which he can be called? The *fear* of God fits him to be entrusted: the *favour* of God raises and animates his expectations: the *promise* of God supports him under difficulties: the *word* of God gives general direction to his steps; and the *blessing* of God attends them. You shall, however, not take my word for this: you shall see the fact.

Compare any irreligious servant with that servant of *Abraham*, whose character is recorded in Gen. xxiv. What a holy acquaintance had this man formed with his God! what reliance on his providence! what fidelity to his master! what diligence! what real dignity of character, though in service! *He ruled over all that Abraham had*, but forgot not that he was still Abraham's servant. Entrusted with a business of the last importance, he conducted it as his own: or, as the Apostle speaks, *with singleness of heart, as unto the Lord:* Eph. vi. 5. As he approached the place of his business, *he made the camels to kneel down without the city, by a well of water;* and knowing from whom all our help cometh, he said, *O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good*

speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master. On observing signs of success in answer to his prayer, he blesses the God of his master; and, on his business being successfully concluded, he again *worships the Lord;*—transacting his concerns more with God than with man, and mixing prayer with praise in every stage of it.

Nor suppose that he was less diligent because he was so devout: *fervent in spirit,* he was not *slothful in business:* Rom. xii. 11. An idle enthusiast may disgrace religion, and a real Christian may have his faults: but Religion itself is the friend of Business. It directs it: it transacts it honourably: it generally secures success to it. Doing business with diligence and truth appears to have been a part of this man's religion. He, and the men that were with him, *tarried that night; and they arose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.* And when the brother and the mother of the damsel, whom he had sought in marriage for his master's son, would have detained him a few days, *he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way. Send me away, that I may go to my master.*

Now compare, as I said, the wisdom and worth of this servant of God, with the folly and falsehood of such a slave to gold as Gehazi (2 Kings v), and you will perceive, that, when Christ said, *Take my yoke* (Matt. xi. 29) or enter into my

service, he shewed us the only way to freedom, usefulness, happiness, or rest.

Great excellence, indeed, in any station, has always been rare; nor should the characters whom I am about to mention, merely as *models* for imitation, be made standards to measure others by, or become occasions of discouragement to any. Such comparisons would be odious. Many, who are truly sincere as Christians, and valuable as servants, fall short of others in certain respects. Our Lord calls that ground *good*, which brought forth but *thirty*; though other ground produced *sixty* and a *hundred* fold: Matt. xiii. 23. Yet excellence is not confined to any age; and servants, like Abraham's, may be found even in this.

Some years ago I became acquainted with a servant, whom I shall call Lucius: one, who, knowing the human heart in its deceitfulness and depravity (Jer. xvii. 9), stood indeed before his God, like the publican *smiting upon his breast*; but, before his Master, he stood with an integrity and diligence, which his master had long observed, and which at length gained his entire confidence. Lord ****** thought and talked of Christianity like many more who have it yet to learn; but he was constrained to admire its effects in his servant Lucius. He saw in him evident marks of the fear of God; of the consolations of the gospel; of the truth which it enjoins, and the devotion which it inspires: but, while he beheld all this as a singular

matter of fact, maintained and exercised in a house like his, he was equally struck in observing, that Lucius was one of the most humble and attentive of his domestics, and no less eminent as a servant than as a saint. The unbelieving Lord (for who can change the heart but God only?) continued, while he lived, to advance and vindicate the Christian servant; and, dying, bequeathed a solid testimony to his virtue.

Them that honour God he will honour: 1 Sam. ii. 30. And he will send the honour by what hand he pleases.

To Lucius, the servants also looked as to a common friend or brother: he instructed them: he assisted them: he reconciled them: he was their example; and, if there were any more foolish and profligate than the rest, he had the honour of their reproach. I need only to add, that I mention this fact, as well as the former, to shew how honourable a part such servants sustain in society; to shew that true religion is the same in every age; to exhibit the fruits of genuine Christianity, wherever it is found; and to encourage servants to higher aims than they usually entertain.

CHAPTER VII.

PIETY ENCOURAGED.

As those, who have been awakened to a serious regard for their salvation are likely to be among the first who take up such a Tract as this, their character ought to be particularly remembered in it; for their dangers, as well as their privileges, are peculiar: throughout this chapter, therefore, I speak to such only.

And let me affectionately intreat you, my Christian Friends, *to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness:* Eph. iv. 1, 2. While you are the servants of God, be careful never to forget that he has appointed you to be also the servants of *man.* One duty should never be opposed to another duty. Our religion teaches us to adorn our station; not to forget it. Beware, therefore, of the error of those, who, upon taking up a religious profession, have become conceited, forward, and unmindful of that order and decorum which God has appointed for the well-being of society.

Instead of disgusting your master by such a conduct, endeavour, by every lawful means, but by no other whatever, to secure a place in his esteem, as well as in his house; and, in order to this, let your diligence be as his right hand, and your care as his right eye. Study his temper

and his interest, and your own will be studied at the same time.

A certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick, and ready to die. And, when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him to come and heal his servant: Luke vii. 2, 3. You may here remark, how dear a servant may render himself to his employer; and how God causes one good office to be repaid by another.

But I will come nearer home. Lydia is the servant of a small family, whose mistress I lately visited after a long illness. "Sir," said she, "the girl who has just left the room, is a greater comfort to me than I can express. She watches me with the affection of a daughter, and the care of a nurse. When my complaints make me peevish, she contrives something to sooth me. I often observe her taking pains to discover what would add to my comfort; and often am presented with the thing I wish for, before I express it in words. I live without suspicion: for I perceive her to be conscientious, even to scrupulosity. My chief complaint is, that she takes so much care of me; that I cannot make her take sufficient care of herself."

"I have observed," said I, "her attention at church, as well as when waiting upon you."

"My servant," continued she, "is a Christian; and, in my late distress, afforded me her prayers

as well as her tears. Her parents were too poor to give her any education; but she has taught herself to read, and frequently reads the Scriptures to me. Now and then, while she is reading, her heart is too full to be quite silent on the passage; and then she drops an expression or two, accompanied with such simplicity and meaning, as to bring to my mind those words, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*: Luke x. 21. In short I esteem her one of the most valuable gifts I ever received from an indulgent Providence; and never could have supposed that so much of my comfort depended on the faithfulness and care of a poor servant."

After saying some things to encourage this worthy girl, as I passed her in going away, I could not help saying also to myself, "How much better do these retired virtues deserve recording than those splendid mischiefs which historians call up all their eloquence to adorn!"

But, to return. Are you in prosperous circumstances? Be careful, lest you forget Him who placed you in them, and lest you abuse these advantages to the dishonour of your best Friend. Often recollect, that you keep your present station during his pleasure; and consider, with pious Nehemiah, that every heart is in his hand, and every gift at his disposal.

And here, by the way, is another instance of a man, who found that earthly business is never so well conducted, as by heavenly wisdom. He had a most arduous undertaking before him; but, with God for his helper, he despaired not of success. He requested his master that he might be permitted to pursue his undertaking; but secretly looked to God alone for the answer which he was to receive. While he presented wine to the king, he worshipped a greater King!—even, one, who, he knew, *turns the hearts of kings as the rivers of water:* Prov. xxi. 1. Bitter enemies opposed him; but a man like Nehemiah always knows what to do with his enemies: he puts them into God's hand, while he walks wisely and uprightly before them. Admirable was his conduct, when he found some (whom they might call of his own sect) acting amiss. With a holy indignation he testified against their abuses, though they were engaged with him in the same general design: he expected no success but in the way of righteousness; and, in this way, he found it.

Let us thank God that he hath given such examples as these for every station in life; and then let us beg for grace to imitate them.

Should your present station be discouraging, trust God and act uprightly, and you shall succeed at length even beyond your expectations. I may encourage every pious servant, as ELISHA did the young man that served him: *Fear not;*

for they that be with us are more than they that be with them: 2 Kings vi. 16. It was in a patient, faithful service, under hard treatment, that Jacob found a friend to plead his cause, which his master could not but notice: *I have learned,* said Laban, *by experience, that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake:* Gen. xxx. 27. The blessing of *Abraham* was the portion of *Jacob,* and, we are assured, shall be equally the portion of every Christian, to the end of time; for *if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise:* Gal. iii. 29.

Read what a train of difficulties *Joseph* had to encounter. Hated by his brethren,—falsely accused by his mistress,—and imprisoned for his integrity, still, like *the moon walking in brightness,* he continued to shine through a disasterous night; securely relying on him *who cannot lie;* and who promises to make *all things work together for good, to them that love him:* Rom. viii. 28.

Affliction is a school in which a good man learns not only to be wise; but, in the end, to be thankful. I have somewhere read of a poor servant or slave, who, under great severity, had fled from the worst of masters to the best. I mean he had sought rest in the bosom of Jesus Christ, the common Friend of the weary and heavy laden. This man was so impressed with a sense of the benefits which he had derived from his afflictions, that, lying on his death-bed, and seeing his master

standing by, he eagerly caught the hands of his oppressor, and kissing them, said, "These hands have brought me to Heaven."

In dark and perplexing cases, study the histories of Jacob, Joseph, Nehemiah, Daniel, and other eminent characters who lived in difficult services; and learn from them to trust, where you cannot trace, the designs of Providence. If at any time you are discouraged in your endeavours to please man, look to God; he will accept the feeblest service done for his sake: he is easy to be pleased, though man is not. He rends the rocks, but will not *break a bruised reed:* Isa. xlii. 3. He inhabits eternity, and he dwells also in *the humble and contrite heart:* Isa. lvii. 15.

A Christian servant considers his work as appointed of God, though delivered to him by the hand of man: he is therefore, found serving God in his worldly service; performing it, not only as in his sight, but also as his *will.* And this softens his yoke, and removes the mistake of his service being a meanness or a drudgery: since he knows that it is both the honour and the joy of angels to do their Lord's will; whether it be to crush an immense army, like Sennacherib's (2 Kings xix. 35), or to wait upon a poor prisoner, like Peter: Acts xii. 7.

One of the wisest of the ancient philosophers (who nevertheless lived and died in service) observes, That "here, as in a theatre, every one

of us has his proper part allotted to him: nor should we regard who is appointed to act the prince, or who the beggar; who the master, or who the servant; but who shall perform his own part best." And a wiser than he exhorts, *Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it:* that is, it is a small and momentary consideration to one who has such views and hopes as a Christian: *for he, that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman:* 1 Cor. vii. 21, 22.

It is also such a servant's comfort to know, that, whatever part or service he is appointed to perform, and whatever present discouragements he meets, his *labour shall not be in vain in the Lord:* 1 Cor. xv. 58. He is a master who may *raise* vast expectations in the hearts of his servants, but he cannot *disappoint* the least. The dying reflection of a servant of one of our English kings is full of instruction to us all in this respect. Stript in his old age of that honour and wealth to which he had been raised, and to which few subjects ever attained, he justly exclaimed, "Had I but served my God as faithfully as I have served my master, he would not have forsaken me in my grey hairs.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISCRETION.

SHOULD it be your lot to dwell where disorder and profaneness prevail, and where your serious views and conscientious regard to God and his word may be scorned, be in nothing *terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition; but to you of salvation, and that of God: for to you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake:* Phil. 1. 28, 29.

Endeavour also to derive instruction even from such scenes as these: for every place is a school to the wise. Observe how every thing proves the value of religion. See how man sinks into ruin and wretchedness as he forsakes his God. Observe in what a variety of ways the corruption of nature breaks out, particularly in the tongue; *that world of iniquity:* James iii. 6. Mark how vile a slavery sin is; and how degraded a character every man becomes, who lives under its dominion: forgetting God, like the prodigal, he forgets himself; and wanders on, committing outrages against every thing sacred and serious. Observe also, that these very outrages, like the ravings of a poor lunatic against his friends and his remedies, not only shew the pitiable condition in which he lies; but may serve also to remind you of the value of

that relief and cure which the Gospel affords;—a remedy, which the unhappy scoffer so much despises, and so much needs: *you* know that it would bring him back to a Father: *you* feel that it would bring him to himself. Need I add here, that such a wretched state of things is a constant occasion of gratitude to a Christian for his own deliverance; and should teach him continually to cry, "*What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?* (Ps. cxvi. 12); and how shall I best recommend these benefits to others?"

On this subject permit me to drop a few hints.

In whatever circumstances you live, endeavour to do all the good you can, with the least harm: and, to this end, be careful that the face of your profession be as sober and amiable as possible:—*walking in wisdom towards them that are without:* Col. iv. 5, or, as the Psalmist expresses it, *I will behave myself* WISELY *in a perfect way:* Ps. ci. 2. There is a crude or unripe sort of piety, which indeed ought not to be mistaken for hypocrisy, but is so like it, that the mistake is easily made.

The following account, given me by one, whom, from the frankness of his acknowledgments, I ought to call Honestus, will sufficiently explain what I mean:—

"Though, at my first setting out in religion," said he, "I was sincere in the main, I was yet so enthusiastic and conceited, so harsh and untractable, that my most candid acquaintance scarcely

knew what to make of me. I mistook a stiff and whimsical singularity for Christian simplicity; little suspecting the temper which lurked under it. When I had been rude, I called it Faithfulness; and, when I suffered for my rashness or imprudence, I supposed it was for righteousness' sake. Other Christians met persecution; but I invited it: others left the world: but I quarrelled with it. So little did I consider the time and place for serious things, and introduced them in so strange and improper a way, that when I tried to make my friends serious, I often provoked them to smile!

"These mistakes," said he, "while they took away all weight from my character, occasioned disgust at other things in me, which were scriptural and praiseworthy; and made me rather a hindrance to the cause of religion than a help: for, while I justly lamented the errors of those I lived with, I forgot that I, in some measure, promoted the very errors I lamented. I considered not, that for want of mixing *good sense* with *good things*, I myself became a sort of argument for their vanity and extravagance. Were they checked at any time on these accounts, they immediately cried, 'What! would you advise us to imitate Honestus?'"

They, who have the cause of true religion at heart, cannot but be grieved when they see it thus misrepresented; and that, not only by designing

hypocrites, but by men who, like Honestus, really mean well. Christianity is indeed plain, but not rude; simple, but not absurd; mortified, but not morose. If the Christian is a *pilgrim and a stranger upon earth* (Heb. xi. 13), he is also, like Abraham among the sons of Heth (Gen. xxiii), to be a wise and an amiable stranger. He should be too simple, to fall into affectation: too real a character, to act a part: and too well acquainted with the evil of offences (Matt. xviii. 17), to raise them unnecessarily. In a word, he is *not to be as the hypocrites, who disfigure their faces* (Matt. vi. 16); nor as those fanatics, who by setting up one truth against another, disfigure the Gospel. It is as the Apostle speaks, *By manifestation of the truth*, that is the whole truth, practical as well as doctrinal, that we *commend ourselves* and our religion *to every man's conscience in the sight of God:* 2 Cor. iv. 2.

Above all, when you treat of religious subjects avoid passionate or rude expressions: not only because they are a disgrace to your profession: but, also, because they will defeat your very design: *for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God:* James i. 20.

Whenever you are called to give an account of your religious profession, or of any particular step which you are obliged to take for conscience sake, endeavour to commend your self to the conscience of the inquirer, especially by the manner

of your reply. The Scripture, which teaches us to be ready to answer such inquiries, charges us also to do it with *meekness and fear:* 1 Pet. iii. 15.

Elizabeth found she could be spared at no time on the Sunday to attend the public worship of God, and therefore felt it her duty to seek another place. The lady with whom she lived questioned her on this only act. Elizabeth was humble, and naturally backward to speak: but being pressed to open her mind, she plainly stated what she felt;—her regard to God's command, the benefit she had found in attending his house, the value of the soul, the awful approach of eternity, and the shortness and uncertainty of the time allotted her to prepare for it. She mentioned also "the exceeding great love of her Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ in dying for her, and the innumerable benefits obtained thereby."

But what more particularly leads me to mention this case, is the Christian-like spirit with which her zeal was attended.

"You seem to be very sincere," said the lady, "and I cannot but respect your piety; but, on many accounts, I should not choose to alter the rules of my family."

"Madam," she replied, "though I am obliged to leave you, I hope I shall never forget the many kindnesses I have received. In many things you have treated me more like a mother than like a

mistress. I can truly say, That your favour is more to me than that of any one, except God's; but he tells me, That I have a soul which must be saved or lost for ever. I find I cannot live without hope, and I can have no hope but in his ways. May he abundantly bless you and your family, while I trust him to provide for me!"

As I have been speaking throughout this chapter to such only as make a serious profession of religion, I hope that what has been said will be sufficiently plain to them.

And may the mistakes which I have mentioned, and many others, which I have not room to notice, be far removed from your character, my Christian Friends! Instead of such doubtful appearances, *do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, as the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom,* I pray earnestly that *ye* may *shine as lights in the world:* Phil. ii. 14, 15.

CHAPTER IX.

SUITABLE SCRIPTURES.

To assist you as Christian servants in the noblest of all aims, I shall, in this chapter, collect together those passages of Scripture which were written for your particular use. You will have them here in one view, and at hand: and I wish you to get

them by heart, as infallible rules for your conduct and comfort.

It will be profitable also for you often to reflect upon them as part of the very profession which you make among men.

It is as if you said to the rest of mankind, *Choose ye whom ye will serve:* but, as for us, we are the followers of one, who, with the greatest promises, has connected the following commands; and which, as his disciples, we receive as our rules of action:—*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers: but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free:* Eph. vi. 5—8.

Again: *Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed: and they that have believing masters, let them not despise them* (or pay them less respect) *because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort:* 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.

A high expectation in entering the house, even

of a *believing Master*, is often the forerunner of disappointment: and a high spirit will not only disorder any house; but will afterwards vent itself in complaints, and multiply scandals.

Martha called upon me in trouble, and out of place; and I could plainly perceive, even from her own account, how much her troubles arose from her misconduct. She had hastily left a former service, where she enjoyed every reasonable privilege, in order to enter the house of a wealthy citizen, where her own religious views were embraced. Martha had newly taken up a profession of religion; but had not learned much more than half her lesson. She needed the advice before given, about changing places; and though she was zealous for some Scriptures, she had overlooked others; particularly such as I am collecting in this chapter.

Martha had indeed read, That *if any seem to be religious, and bridle not his tongue*, such a *man's religion is vain:* James i. 26. yet the defects which she saw in the family (and what family is free from defects?) she scrupled not to censure, both at home and abroad. Instead of charitably covering, or patiently healing any disorder, she thoughtlessly inflamed it: and, where Humility would have been silent, or where Tenderness would have contrived an apology, she was too ready to accuse, and too eager to relate. She expected many allowances in such a house, but

made few. With great imperfections herself, she wondered to find them in others; and, while she complained that the Gospel was not more adorned in a professing family, she forgot that one of its chief ornaments is *a meek and quiet spirit.*

Did Martha *mean* that *the name of God and his doctrine should be blasphemed* by all this? Certainly not. But why did she not consider to what such a conduct as her's must lead?

I would fain hope that this character is not very common; but, knowing that it really exists, I could not but point out the evil of it. Is Martha, after all, a Christian? Many will doubt it: it would be well if she doubted it herself. Certain it is, that, if she be one, the further she advances in Christianity, the more bitterly will she lament her present mistakes.

Let us return again to the words of the Apostle, recollecting what he adds to those last quoted: *If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing.* 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4.

Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again: not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things: Tit. ii. 9, 10.

If others say, "I am disposed to act well when

I am treated well," a Christian should recollect, that the conduct above mentioned is enjoined, *not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward: for this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience* sake *toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called:* 1 Pet. ii. 18—21.

Bear with me then, my Christian Friends, while in love I warn you to reflect, that if, instead of regarding this your profession, any one of you should leave the parlour with murmurs,—if he should enter among his fellow-servants with angry and reproachful expressions, when his will is crossed, or his conduct blamed,—if he should slight the family-worship, because it may not be conducted exactly to his taste,—if he should make light of a stated agreement or contract, or forget that the inordinate *love of money is the root of all evil* (1 Tim. vi. 10), and prepares the heart for every thing that is mean and false,—if he should be found wasting, or making away with that which is entrusted to his care, and employing a secrecy in it which proves the guilt;—in a word, if he should not be distinguished from other servants by his regard to the scriptural rules which I have just mentioned, upon what ground are they to take him for a Christian? and how is the

doctrine of God our Saviour to be adorned or recommended by him?

I affectionately intreat you also to reflect, how awful the case, if any of you should thus become their stumbling-block! or lead them to suppose that Christianity is rather a name or notion that puffs up its possessors, than that holy religion which the Scriptures describe! I say, Reflect, how awful it is for a Christian professor thus to become a witness against Christianity, and an assistant to *the god of this world* in *blinding the minds of them that believe not!* 2 Cor. iv. 4.

Here, methinks, I hear a sincere lover of the truth say, "I see more clearly the nature of my calling than I once did; and I feel that I also have made mistakes by not keeping my eye more strictly upon Scripture Rules. I perceive I shall do nothing right; but as I *set the Lord always before me* (Ps. xvi. 8), doing service unto Him; and not merely to man, and looking unto Him for that which I am to receive, I plainly see that many things, in which others allow themselves, are quite contrary to my profession. If they are not faithful in the smallest things, if they are disposed to please only when they are pleased, I am called to follow and imitate my Heavenly Master; taking up his cross, and suffering patiently, though it be wrongfully, as he did before me. It is but a little while that I can either suffer or serve: a little while, and a poor servant shall

reign with Christ! Let me then seek to glorify Him more in my appointed station and only opportunity: and may my coming so short, even in my best endeavours, lead me to rely more simply and intirely on his merits and mediation, who *took upon him the form of a servant;* by whose obedience alone *many are made righteous*, and by whose poverty alone many can become rich!"

Let me encourage such a true disciple of Christ, by considering what a testimony such a conduct as the Scriptures before mentioned recommend, must leave in every family where it is really found. Men often laugh and scoff at a Christian, when their consciences are secretly pierced with the truth of his profession. They are more goaded by truth than they choose to confess. Few, indeed, are so hardened in ignorance and sin, but at one time or other they are ready to cry, *Let me die the death of the righteous!—let my last end be like his!* Numb. xxiii. 10. Nor is any station so low and contracted, nor any prospects so unpromising, as to forbid us to hope for success by a *patient continuance in well-doing:* Rom. ii. 7. for God, who works by instruments, often glorifies his power by employing such as men despise; and, when he pleases to work by such, nothing can prevent the execution of his design.

Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master—but he was a leper. And the Syrians had gone out by

companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid: and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would to *God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy:* 2 Kings v. 1—3.

Now, from the simple report of this little captive, what surprising consequences followed! The report is carried to her lord. The king of Syria sends, in behalf of his favourite officer, to the king of Israel; and Naaman goes to the prophet. He is first led (and that by one of his servants) to cease from his reasonings on a divine appointment: he then submits to it: he receives health: he acknowledges the true God: he gives him glory; and becomes a monument to all generations of the mighty effects, which it sometimes pleases that God to produce by a servant's report.

Let me add here, That I have found Naaman to be not the only leper recovered by such a report. I have known a more desperate leprosy than his healed in a similar way. I have seen, among other instances which I could name, one of the most abandoned youths I ever knew, induced, by the patient example and affectionate persuasion of his father's servant, to turn his eyes to the *fountain opened for sin* (Zech. xiii. 1) in the Gospel:—a man, whom the youth had before long scorned and insulted, only because, like Cain's,

his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous: 1 John iii. 12.

Fear nothing, therefore, standing in your appointed station, and in a right spirit; nor, on any account, let *thy heart envy sinners* in their momentary blaze: *but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long; for surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off:* Prov. xxiii. 17, 18. The highest and happiest ambition of a rational creature is to stand waiting for that commendation, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant! thou hast been faithful over a few things: I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord:* Matt. xxv. 21.

CHAPTER X.

THE IRRELIGIOUS ADDRESSED.

As a Minister and a Friend, I must not forget those servants, who, though of very different descriptions, are yet, at present, destitute of true religion: that religion, the principles and spirit of which I have stated, and the disciples of which I have described. Such may have read this Address thus far, and ought by no means to find it concluded, without a special regard to their case: a case, indeed, which their Minister cannot but regard with the tenderest compassion; and therefore here adds a few reflections for their particular

consideration and use. Blessed be God, our religion not only commands us to love those who differ from us, but it *influences* us to do it!

And such I would affectionately intreat to examine, Whether, what shall be here addressed, be not the plain declarations of God's holy word, quite apart from matters of private opinion or doubtful disputation. All I wish for, is to call your attention to your Bible;—to bring forward what God has so repeatedly said, and what you are so unhappily disposed to forget.

Let me also intreat you to be wise *in time*; for the greater part of mankind are cut off, before they begin to think seriously. *They die without wisdom* (Job iv. 21), because they die without taking *warning*: like that senator, who, as he went to the assembly, had an account put into his hand by some friend, of a conspiracy formed against his life: he was, however, too much engaged to attend to it; and therefore put it, for the present, into his pocket. He intended to read it the first opportunity; but was stabbed before that opportunity came.

It is under such an anxiety that I now put this paper into your hand. There is, indeed, a conspiracy formed against your life; yea, against the dearest part of man, your soul. This soul is very soon to enter an assembly composed *of all nations, tongues and people*, standing before God, the Judge of all. In the way, an *Adversary* (1 Pet. v. 8)

lies in wait, to give a fatal stab to its everlasting happiness: sin poisons the dagger in his hand; and a careless unbelieving state of mind affords him opportunity. In such circumstances, shall I scruple to warn you in the plainest terms? God forbid! My silence would hazard my own safety. I cannot forget what was once said to a minister, *If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood shall I require at thy hand:* Ezek. xxxiii. 8.

The interests, therefore, of your soul are your dearest interests. You will forget the loss of all other things; but this loss will be irreparable. In losing this, all will be lost! *For what shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Mark viii. 36, 37.

Presumptuous minds, *blinded by the god of this world* (2 Cor. iv. 4), may, indeed, seek to overwhelm every consideration of this kind with scoffs and ribaldry; and try to harden themselves and others against the evil day, by the worst of all hopes; namely, "that God is not to be believed." But this desperate conduct can make no alteration whatever as to the things despised: the awful *facts* remain: time flies apace: eternity approaches, whether we prepare for it or not; and *God is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent;* Num. xxiii. 19. He

hath declared his purpose: he hath warned us of our danger: he hath pointed out our remedy. It is his perfection, that He cannot change, nor deny himself; and therefore, he calls upon us to change; that is, *to turn to him and live:* Ezek. xviii. 32.

Such as think to avoid a danger by turning their eyes from it, have been well compared to that silly bird, which, when closely pursued, thrusts his head into the sand or a thicket; and, because he does not see his pursuers, vainly hopes that they have lost sight of him.

But *Wisdom crieth without, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge! Turn you at my reproof;* Prov. i. 20—23. Our wisdom then consists, not in shutting our eyes against a danger, but in opening them to discover a refuge:—not in refusing to hear the charge brought against sin, saying with the wicked, *Tush, thou God carest not for it*; but in humbly confessing the evil; submitting to *his* account of it, and embracing the remedy which he hath provided against it. For all attempts to conceal or excuse this evil are as vain as they are presumptuous: it meets us in the Scriptures,—in the history of every age,—in the scenes of every day,—and in our own consciences, if they are not blind or seared.

Man, indeed, may choose to make light of his guilt: but he should recollect that he is not to be

the *Judge*. A criminal may plead for mercy: much more may he embrace it in any way it is offered: but in what court is he allowed to "decide upon his *deserts?*"

How the Governor of the universe ought to punish sin, and what a government of infinite perfection, like his, requires, we, insects as we are before him, can form no right notions. It is folly and presumption of the worst kind, when *we* attempt to determine what he ought to do. There is but one way left for wisdom to choose; namely, where we cannot guide ourselves, to accept of an Infallible Guide; and what it is impossible we should know without God, to come and learn of God. When we look around us, and can see no other assurance of safety, no other probable resting-place for the sole of our foot, surely it is our wisdom then to prepare for the worst that can possibly happen: and to come and rest on that foundation, which he has laid in a Redeemer. Rom. ix. 33.

Surely, I say again, if any conduct deserves to be called Wise, it must be that which shuns the danger which he points out, and embraces a method of safety which he recommends; nor can Folly itself be more foolish, than to plan, not only without his counsel, but *against* it.

But what is this counsel? (for I am labouring to persuade you to abide by none but his)—What hath he said to every one of us? Is it not that *he*

hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness? (Acts xvii. 31)—that we should stand *ready* to meet that day, because it cometh when least expected (Matt. xxiv. 44)—and that *it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gommorah in that day, than for those* who have lived under greater advantages, and neglected them? Mark vi. 11.

He, who is as *a man taking a far journey*, and hath committed *to every one his work* (Mark xiii. 34), speaks of a servant who *should say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming*; and accordingly pursues his evil course, equally regardless of God or man. But what is the consequence? *The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers:* Luke xii. 45, 46.

He further assures us, That it is not enough that we have not been riotous or injurious, like the servant above. He informs us, That we have each a talent to improve: which you will find described at large in Matt. xxv. You will there see another servant (which means every careless sinner) coming and declaring, that, after entertaining hard thoughts of his master's requirements, he had gone, in a sort of despair, and *hid his Lord's talent in the earth. Lo, there,* says he, *thou hast that is thine!* What followed this wretched

excuse, and what became of him whom our Lord calls a *wicked and slothful servant*, I (who would fain secure you from this end) intreat you to read; and, with it, that very awful, but instructive account of the great day which immediately follows it.

To listen, then, as this servant did, to our own vain thoughts, or to those of our unbelieving companions, instead of attending to these gracious warnings of our Lord, is certainly one of the most desperate delusions that ever entered the human heart. "I shall do as well as others," says a thoughtless creature: but should he not first learn, from the Judge of the whole earth, what others are doing? Should he embark soul and body on the ocean of Eternity upon such a presumption as this? (a sort of presumption, upon which he would scarcely risk a shilling of his property) and, especially, after being expressly charged, not by his minister only, but by his Saviour, to *strive to enter in at the strait gate* (Luke xiii. 24); and assured, that *broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat;* but that *narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it?* Matt. vi. 13, 14.

To rescue you, therefore, from a *world which lieth in wickedness* (1 John v. 19)—to prevent your committing a mistake for which no remedy is provided in eternity,—and to awaken you to the

pursuit of eternal life before *the night cometh, when no man can work* (John ix. 4).—I have brought forward these scriptures; and add my fervent prayers, that they may be accompanied with a divine blessing to your heart!

CHAPTER XI.

THE INCONSIDERATE WARNED.

A PIOUS writer of the last century has some remarks, so applicable to what has just been said, that I shall select and abridge a passage or two for your use:—

"Some," says he, "are so carried away by the stream of evil company, that, when one and another is cut off, it does not daunt them; because they see not whither their companions are gone. Little do they think how such are now lamenting the madness of a careless state. In Luke xvi. the rich man in hell would fain have had one sent to warn his five brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. Probably he knew their minds and lives; and knew that they were hasting thither, little supposing that he was there.

"I remember being told of a man who was driving a flock of lambs upon a bridge over the Severn; and, something hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped upon the wall of the bridge, and fell into the stream: the rest, seeing

him, one after another leaped also over, and were drowned: those, that were behind, little suspected what became of them which were gone before; but thought they might venture to follow their companions. Even so it is with unconverted men: one dieth by them, and falls into destruction, and another follows; and yet they pursue the same course, not considering whither their companions are gone; but when death hath once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, what would they give to return!"

"Moreover," continues he, "they have a crafty and malicious enemy, whose principal business is to prevent their conversion, and to keep them quiet and secure (Luke xi. 21): and this he attempts, by persuading them to disbelieve the Scriptures, or not to trouble their minds with such matters; or by persuading them to think ill of a godly life, and that they may be saved without conversion, and that there is no need of all this stir and anxiety about it. He will tell them that God is so merciful, that there is no danger; at least, that they may stay a little longer, and take their pleasure and follow the world at present, and repent hereafter. By such delusions as these, Satan keeps them captives, and leads them to ruin!

But consider, I pray you, what means this repentance *hereafter*, with which so many are thus

deluded? Can they repent at any time without the grace of God? Are they likely to obtain that grace, who continue to neglect and despise it? My concern for your safety obliges me to add, that nothing can be more express than the declaration of our Judge, That there is a time approaching in which those who have set at nought his counsel, shall indeed call, but receive no answer: Prov. i. 28. Oh, how many of them that are lost, once vainly resolved to repent *hereafter!*

If, therefore, *fools make a mock at sin* (Prov. xiv. 8), and if, more *foolish* still, they despise their only remedy, turn from these to the voice of Wisdom and of God, in Proverbs, chap. i.; for there you will see expressly described, both the *character* and the *end* of such men.

CHAPTER XII.

A MINISTER'S AIM.

SUCH Scriptures as have been mentioned, it is confessed, have a tendency to disturb and wound those who live in a careless and unconverted state: they were, indeed, written with this very design. Let such, however, recollect, that *faithful are the wounds of a friend:* Prov. xxvii. 16.

When your body is disordered, you send for a physician or surgeon, and willingly submit to whatever he prescribes: you depend upon his skill and integrity through, perhaps, a tedious and

painful operation, if, peradventure you may at length regain your health. But what is the health of a dying body, compared with the salvation of an immortal soul? Or who is that earthly physician, that may be trusted like the Heavenly One, whose advice we have heard?

Much more pleasant is a minister's work in healing a broken heart, than in breaking a hard one. To warn you of your danger, is, indeed, our *duty*: but to congratulate you on your safety, would be our *joy*. We join the angels in rejoicing over a returning sinner; and, as we see you united to the flock of Christ, we are ready to cry, with the Apostle, *What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?—for ye are our glory and joy:* 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

With what pleasure was that letter written (though written in bonds) which was sent by a servant returning like a new creature to his master! *I beseech thee, for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: which in time past was to thee unprofitable; but now profitable to thee and to me! Whom I have sent again: thou, therefore, receive him; that is, mine own bowels. He, perhaps, departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him for ever: as a brother beloved. —Receive him as myself!* Philem. 10—17.

You see plainly, here, for what a minister labours, and what is the proper effect of the Gospel;

and may he, who, to meet our deep necessities, came down, and *took upon him the form of a servant* (Phil. ii. 7), and sends by whom and in what way he will, give success to my endeavours for your benefit? that, receiving yourself the inestimable blessing of a saving conversion to God, you may become a blessing to every family with which you live! Let your prayers be united with mine to this end: and be not discouraged, because you cannot pray as you would. Pray as you can. God looketh not at the expression, but at the heart; and hath declared, that *he is nigh unto all them that call upon him:* Ps. cxlv. 18. The Scriptures which you read will furnish you with both matter and language for prayer; an example of which I shall leave you at the conclusion.

If, convinced of your sad state in having wandered from the best of Fathers—and if, tired, like the prodigal, of its slavery—you are desirous to return, remember how graciously our Lord invites *all that labour, and are heavy laden,* to come unto him for rest (Matt, xi. 28); declaring, that he will *in no wise cast him out that comes* (John vi. 37), that his blood shall cleanse such from the guilt of sin, and his Spirit deliver them from the power of it; and that he will freely give his *Holy Spirit to them that ask him:* Luke xi. 13.

As his servants and witnesses upon earth, we are bound to declare these truths; and to declare

them with firmness, on the authority of his *word*. We can speak of them also from our own *experience:* we have been in your condition: we were convinced of our danger: we advanced upon the credit of his truth: our prospects brightened as we advanced; and the more we know of religion and its Author, the more we feel and admire its evidence and importance! Can we then avoid adopting the words of the Apostle (though in an humbler sense) *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: and, truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full:* 1 John i. 3, 4.

It is in advancing, that you may expect the same increasing conviction; for a Christian's evidence grows with his experience. *He, that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself* (1 John v. 10); and, in his time and measure, shall be enabled to resist every temptation to apostasy, with the holy confidence of that faithful servant*, who, when urged to save his life by reviling his Master, replied, Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and never received any thing but kindness from him; how then can I now blaspheme my King and my Saviour!"

* Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, supposed to have been a disciple of St. John, and the person meant by the Angel of the Church of Smyrna, in Rev. ii. 8.—He suffered about the year 167.

A PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, *who dwellest in the high and holy place, with him also that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at thy word,* mercifully attend to the cry of a lost sinner, who desires to approach thee in the name and mediation of thy Son Jesus Christ!

I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies; for I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight. God be merciful to me a sinner.

But *who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin! Thou delightest in mercy.* Thou hast often *called when I have refused.* Thou now criest in my heart, *Turn ye, for why will ye die? Turn thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned. Heal me, and I shall be healed. Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*

Glory to thy holy name, that when I forgot thee thou didst remember me; and still saidst, *Seek ye my face.* Pour upon me now thy promised *Spirit of grace and supplication*; and incline my heart to reply, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek!* Yea, *I will seek thee with my whole heart*; for *blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causeth to approach unto thee! Remember me,* therefore, *O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people! O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen.*

Let *the Spirit of Truth lead me into all truth:* and so *open the eyes of my understanding, that I may* savingly *understand the Scriptures,* and find that *wisdom which giveth life to them that have it.*

And, since thou hast given eternal life so freely, and declared this life to be only in thy Son, grant that I may not be of *them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul:* that my trust may be alone in the Lord, my Redeemer; yea, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!* Give me rest, through his labour; health from his wounds: and life, by his death!

Grant also, O my Heavenly Father, that I *may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power in them that believe!* Let thy Spirit be a living spring in my heart, *springing up unto everlasting life.* Make me *a living branch in the true vine,* that I may *bring forth much fruit* to thy glory. May I feel *the joy of the Lord,* to be my *strength;* and find, in every trial, his *grace sufficient for me!*

Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, in sending these thy promised mercies!—and that *thy hand may be with me* in my station, *keeping me from the evils* and temptations which attend it! Bless me, and make me a blessing to those whom I serve, to those that serve with me, and to all my relations!

As a servant, enable me to walk before thee; acting *as in thy sight,* and as serving thee, while

I serve those whom thou hast placed over me. Bless, O Lord, the family in which I live; and help me to walk before them *with all humility of mind,* with truth and soberness, diligence and patience; "doing to others as I would they should do unto me," that I may *adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things!*

As a pilgrim, travelling from Time to Eternity, help me *to walk by faith, and not by sight. As my day is,* let *my strength be. Shew me the path wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee:* and *hold thou me up* in it, *and I shall be safe!*

As a helpless and dying worm, *to whom should I go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* Thou hast promised all I want; nor can I let thee go, *except thou bless me.*

Graciously protect me, while I live: support me, when I come to die! Save, Oh save me from *the worm that never dieth!* and bring me, through the merits of my Redeemer to that *rest which remaineth for the people of God.*

In his name, and for his sake alone, I ask these mercies; to whom, with Thyself and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end! Amen.

THE

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